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AMY LOWELL -- HER CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

Submitted by
Agnes Gertrude Nash

(B. S. in Ed., Boston University, 1923)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

1926

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Lowell, Amy, 1874-1925 - Crit.
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AMY LOWELL

Now she is one with Beauty. She who heard
The call of loveliness in each rare thing
Of craft or nature; lilacs, night of spring,
Feel of warm fur, old volumes crossed and blurred,
The subtlety of sound, the soul of a word,
Her firelit group in friendly loitering,
Great tragedy, quick humor, thoughts that sing
In the sweet passion of a bird or bard,

Now she is strong, who faltered not in pain
From her beloved task; and joyous she
Who loved bright youth; eager and fleet again,
Companioned in a high felicity
Among the Poets who she died to praise.
Now she is one with Beauty for all days.

A. F. Brown

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AMY LOWELL -- HER CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

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AMY LOWELL

HER CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

The age in which we live is essentially a period of transition. Great changes are taking place, or have recently taken place, in government, in economics, in science, and in arts. Of course, since all history is the study of growth, any period may be considered an era of change. Nevertheless, there are certain times which seem to mark the end of one age and the beginning of another. A cataclysmic event like the World War must mean the end of many traditions and the advent of many innovations. The tendency to break away from the old and to reach out toward the new is evidenced in all the arts, but most clearly in what we are accustomed to call "new" or "modern poetry." The chief characteristics of the poetry of our age and country are a disregard for old and time-honored technique; experiments in new and original forms; and an increase in naturalness, boldness, and simplicity both in subject and in treatment.

The "new" American poetry had a distinguished exponent in Amy Lowell, who in her poetic work embodied all the ideals and aims of the "new" school, and in her critical and technical writings explained and analyzed its principles and theories. Daring, original, vigorous, and aggressive, she had the courage of her convictions, and as the leader and spokesman of the "moderns", she had the power of arousing great enthusiasm and

interest. She is worthy of study, therefore, both as a poet and a critic, as a craftsman and a theorist.

Her champions,- and they are many and ardent,- hail her as the prophet of a new and better order. Her opponents are equally positive in condemning her as an iconoclast, an experimenter who took away our bread of authentic poetry and gave us a stone,- an amorphous accretion of words. The latter view has lately been given interesting expression in Herbert Quick's newly-published autobiography, "One Man's Life." Here we have the opinions,- and they are certainly worthy of respect,- of a sympathetic and intelligent student of literature, who, after a book-starved boyhood on a pioneer farm, discovered the treasures of English poetry, which seemed like a magic feast of nectar and ambrosia. And he still finds his literary gods in the great Victorians. "There were giants in those days", he says. "Tennyson was my first love among the poets, the first course in a banquet with which I have never been satiated."

His reaction to, and his judgment upon, the so-called "new" poetry, he thus lucidly explains! "We have today a new substance which is becoming rather important in industry. It is not furnished to its users in the form of finished substance, but in a plastic state, permitting it to be molded into its final and perfect form. Even in the incomplete state, its making is a very wonderful thing, a triumph in chemical engineering, something most admirable, but it is not the finished substance. They designate it by the suffix "A". This gives me my analogy. It seems to me that much of what we are taught



to call poetry now, though it is very admirable as literature, is not poetry at all, but something which might become poetry if put through the last process, which would give it the required primeval regularity of rhythm and, if desired, the rhyme, which would render it capable of being committed to memory, and thus turn it into poetry. As it stands it is mere 'Poetry A'. Miss Lowell's free verse is 'Poetry A' of a very high order."

So the controversy rages, for and against. And it may be proved by the slow analysis of Time that both are right, - champion and opponent. Miss Lowell certainly had great gifts, a talent which she cultivated patiently and assiduously, but Time may show that she has accomplished only a series of interesting experiments, rather than any finished perfected work of art.

A survey of the life of Amy Lowell would record her birth in Brookline on February 9, 1874, at Sevenels, the same house in which she died on May 11, 1925. In her poems we find many references to this well-loved home, - "the old house which had known her from the beginning;" - she describes its lofty ceilings, wide halls, and "beautiful, slippery floors." In lines breathing affectionate remembrance she tells of the walls that watched her while she played, the old trees among which she hunted ghosts and Indians, the gravel sweep where she rolled her hoop.

The first of the Lowells to come to America was Percival Lowell, who settled in Newburyport in 1637. It is recorded that he had been a merchant in Bristol, Somerset. That he had poetic aspirations is evidenced by his "Ode on the Death of

Governor Winthrop." The second and third lines of the following quatrain from this ode might well epitomize the opinion of the modern critics who find in his descendant's verses little to praise and much to condemn:

"Here you have Lowell's loyalty
Penned with slender skill,
And with it no good poetry
But certainly good will."

Descended from the Bristol merchant was Judge John Lowell of the Harvard class of 1760, who was great-great-grandfather of Amy Lowell. He vigorously espoused the cause of liberty in the Revolutionary days, and his newspaper articles signed "Boston Rebel" and "Norfolk Farmer" gained him local fame, - as a defender of his country's rights, however, rather than as a literary light. Lawyer, judge, and patriot, as he was, he yet had time for an avocation, - gardening. His interest in horticulture descended from father to son and in the fourth generation to his great-great-granddaughter, to whose poetic art it doubtless contributed more than did his contributions to the Colonial journals.

Judge Lowell's sons, John Amory and Francis Cabot, were pioneers in the cotton industry, founding the city of Lowell in 1822. The third John Lowell established the Lowell Institute which developed eventually into the University Extension work of today. Although the family was more prominent in business and professional lines, it was not without representation in the

annals of American poetry, for there we find the name of James Russell Lowell, a cousin. Of her immediate family she is not the only one to win a place in the Hall of Fame. A. Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard University, is her brother, and another brother, Percival Lowell, the noted astronomer, founded the Lowell Observatory at Harvard.

Amy Lowell was the daughter of Augustus Lowell and Katharine Bigelow Lawrence, whose father was U. S. minister to the Court of St. James. Mrs. Lowell was a musician and linguist, a fact which accounts in part for Amy Lowell's interest in music and the languages, especially the French language and literature. Her formal education was gained in private schools and from tutors, but this was supplemented by wide reading in the family library and by the broadening influence of travel. She was only eight years old when she made her first trip abroad, and this was but the beginning of a long series of journeys in Europe and the near East, as well as in her own country.

Not until Miss Lowell was twenty-eight years of age, (two years older than John Keats was when he laid down his pen forever) did she definitely adopt a literary career. As a child she had written some verses, but there was nothing precocious in her early efforts, and although she was an eager reader and a lover of literature, there is no indication that any special interest in the creative aspect of poetry persisted. But from the time of her decision to devote herself to writing, she gave herself up to her work with an ardent industry and a wholehearted thoroughness peculiarly characteristic of her. No

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The second part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The third part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The fifth part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The sixth part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The seventh part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The eighth part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The ninth part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order. The tenth part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the solutions of the differential equations of the second order. It is shown that the solutions of the differential equations of the second order are of great importance in the theory of the differential equations of the second order.

"modern" movement in poetry. In 1914, her interest in the work of the Imagists had been aroused, and their first anthology contained one of her poems. In the succeeding anthologies her work was also represented.

In the field of criticism, Miss Lowell published "Six French Poets", in 1915; "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry", in 1917; "A Critical Fable" (verse), in 1922; and the "Biography of Keats," in 1925.

In 1918, she was honored by Tufts, and in 1920 by Columbia, as the Phi Beta Kappa poet. In 1924, she was awarded the Helen Haire Levinson prize (offered by "Poetry, A Magazine of Verse") for her poem, "Evelyn Ray" which had appeared in the issue of December 1923, and which is now included in the new volume, "What's O'Clock".

On the lecture platform, Miss Lowell also won fame. In 1917 and 1918, she gave courses at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, and in 1921, she was the Francis Bergin foundation lecturer at Yale and the Marshall Wood lecturer at Brown. In 1925, she was asked to deliver a course of lectures at Oxford and Cambridge. This invitation to an American woman was so great and so unusual an honor that the public looked forward with interest to learn how she would be received. In the Bookman for June, 1925, the number already in print at the time of her death, is a tribute to her entitled, "Literary Pluck," an article which appears doubly significant from the circumstance that she died before it reached its readers. It tells of the dinner which her friends gave her shortly before the date set

medieval apprentice ever toiled more laboriously than did she in the hope of one day becoming a master workman. She spent eight years in patient study and preparation, "scorning delights to live laborious days." Through wide reading and exhaustive study she made herself thoroughly acquainted with the great masters of her chosen art. The old Boston Athenaeum became her second home, "the dear well loved haunt of happy hours." We have her record of long peaceful days spent in retired book-lined nooks where reverie and quiet reigned supreme. She made the technique of poetry her special study and patiently and faithfully she toiled, finding no royal road to the heights which she aimed to reach.

In 1910, in her thirty-sixth year, her first poem appeared in the Atlantic Monthly. Two years later she published her first volume, "A Dome of Many Colored Glass", a collection of conventional verse which was received with formal praise and which gave little promise of any great poetic gift. Two years later, in 1914, "Sword Blades and Poppy Seed" showed a creative power which the first volume in no way suggested, and with her third volume, "Men, Women, and Ghosts", which followed in 1916, Miss Lowell won very positive recognition as an important figure in contemporary poetry. Five more volumes complete her poetic achievement: "Can Grande's Castle (1918), "Pictures of the Floating World (1919), "Legends (1921), "Fir Flower Tablets",--Translations from the Chinese in collaboration with Florence Ayscough (1921); and "What's O'Clock, a posthumus volume (1925).

Miss Lowell was supremely interested in the so-called

for her departure upon this lecture trip to the great English universities. The occasion was a remarkable tribute, evidencing the place of honor and distinction which she had won in the world of letters. The Bookman article says: "Various critics and friends told her honestly and sincerely how much they admired and loved her. Then they asked her to read a poem. It was only a few friends who realized as she read the final moving lines of "Lilacs" how tired she was, for she made the New England lyric dramatic and beautiful, although she was pale, and her voice did not have the usual ring. Perhaps this tribute to her courage is unnecessary.--- We should like to wish her quick recovery from her illness and to assure her that wherever there are lovers of poetry and of the writing craft, they will grieve that she is not well. Miss Lowell can rest assured that her public is a growing and an affectionate one."

These good wishes, however, were not to be fulfilled. The lecture trip,- her well deserved and hard-won honor,- was cancelled; and with tragic suddenness on May 11, 1925, she died. To the public the news of her passing came with a sense of shock. She was but fifty-two and it was difficult to associate her vivid personality with the idea of death. The succeeding months have, I think, added to her fame, for they have brought to the public mind a wider knowledge of her work and a keener and more general appreciation of her contribution to American letters.

Miss Lowell's personality was strong, vital and interesting. A study of her life reveals her as the product of three contributing forces; her ancestry, her environment, and her own

hard work. It is hard to say which of these forces counts for most, but a clear understanding of her work makes necessary a special consideration of her heritage and traditions. New England claims her, and she recognizes the claim and responds to it in the beautiful closing lines of "Lilacs", which was one of her last poems:

"Lilac is in me because I am New England,
Because my roots are in it,
Because my leaves are of it,
Because my flowers are for it,
Because it is my country
And I speak to it of itself
And sing of it with my own voice
Since certainly it is music."

And yet Miss Lowell was the most "unlocal" of poets. We can identify her work with no locality as we identify that of Wordsworth with the Lake Country or that of Holmes with Boston. She was a cosmopolitan in interest and a democrat in spirit and outlook. This democracy was all the more remarkable when we consider that she was a member of the purest Brahmin caste of New England, a caste described by Holmes as a "race of scholars in which aptitude for learning, and all the other marks, are congenital and hereditary; who take to books as a pointer or a setter to field work; whose names are always in some college catalog or other, and who break out every other generation or two in some learned labor." That the Lowells are recognized in Boston as being Brahmins of the Brahmins is evidenced by the

popular quatrain:

"Here's to dear old Boston
The home of the bean and the cod
Where the Cabots speak only to Lowells
And the Lowells speak only to God."

Yet despite Amy Lowell's imposing background of New Englandism, her secure place in this most select of all aristocracies, no Bohemian or gypsy could be less hidebound than she; a nomad could not be less provincial. But though she cast tradition to the wind, she could not lose her heritage, and it must at least partly explain her achievement in the world of letters. "A scholar," says Holmes, still in explanation of the New England Brahmin, - "is in a large proportion of cases the son of scholars." So it was with Amy Lowell. Her keen mind and her passion for books came from generations of scholarly men, and she grew up in an atmosphere of culture and scholarly interests. Always she was surrounded by the tradition of things intellectual; the Lowell home was a centre of "good talk", and from childhood she counted among her friends men and women whose names are inseparably associated with literary Boston and Cambridge.

Moreover, she was also the descendant of men who were leaders in the world of business, and to these forbears may be traced the vigor and energy which were so important a part of her personality. The success of the Lowells in industry had given the family financial security, so that all the advantages of wealth and leisure were hers. She was able to buy books or

manuscripts which caught her fancy or which were of value in connection with her studies, to enjoy the broadening influences of travel, or to secure for her work a tranquil scholarly quiet, unhampered by petty cares or interruptions. Surely a fertile soil for her poppy seed! There was no necessity for her to commercialize her gift by writing potboilers, and her lack of domestic ties made it possible for her to bring to her work a free mind, and to serve her art exclusively. Sometimes in her poems we come upon passages which make us wonder whether she herself looked upon this last circumstance as an advantage or a disadvantage. In a poem entitled "A Fairy Tale", she tells of the unbidden guest at the christening who cursed the richly dowered babe and left it bitterness.

"The gifts are there, the many pleasant things;
Health, wealth, long-settled friendships, with
a name
Which honors all who bear it,- and the power
Of making words obedient. This is much;
But overshadowing all is still the curse,
That never shall I be fulfilled by love!
Along the parching highway of the world,
No other soul shall bear mine company."

Certainly if this poem is personal or autobiographical, we may plainly read her own disappointment and loneliness of soul. The same note sounds in the concluding lines of "The Garden by Moonlight."

"Oh, Beloved, do you see these orange lilies?

They knew my mother,

But who belonging to me will they know

When I am gone?"

Doubtless the closer human ties for which she herself seems to have felt the need would, by enriching her life, have brought enrichment to her work as well.

But Miss Lowell's gifts were not merely inherited,- a golden shower flung into her lap without any merit or effort on her own part. They were in large measure earned. No doubt much of her ability can be traced to her heritage, but we must not fail to recognize her own achievement in the development of her talent through wide reading and intensive study, patience, perseverance, and hard work. Perhaps the explanation of her accomplishment lies not so much in natural genius seeking expression as in the "noblesse oblige" of a tradition that laid upon her the duty of development and achievement. This impulse for intellectual activity could not be satisfied by unproductive study; she must create. She owed it to her race to develop her gift, to contribute to the literary wealth of the world. From one to whom much has been given, much is expected

One phase of her heritage is interesting to trace, because it seems to have had a very direct influence on her work. We have already spoken of Judge John Lowell of Revolutionary fame, lawyer by profession, gardener by choice. In his Roxbury garden he grew the first orchids in the United States. These brilliant and exotic flowers seem to have blossomed again four

generations later in the riotous colors of the poems of Amy Lowell, to whom flowers and garden were a veritable passion.

It is interesting to study against this background of heritage and tradition the vivid and dominant personality which made Amy Lowell a subject of endless discussion and controversy. She was a born leader, for her outstanding characteristics were those from which leadership springs:- a passion for experiment and innovation, and an aggressive, courageous independence in defence of her beliefs.

Her keen mind had a Renaissance quality,- an intellectual curiosity which made her interested in everything connected with her art, and eager to investigate its every phase, a zest for novelty that attracted her to all that was new and radical. This accounts for her originality and astonishing versatility, and for the wide variety of causes which she espoused. As a poet she sometimes reaches heights of real creative power; as an investigator, experimenter, theorist, and critic she is always prominent, ardently expounding, interpreting, supporting, defending. Hers was a positive nature that gloried in opposition, and she met with plenty of it, for there was in her every pronouncement a note of challenge which provoked contention. As Untermeyer says, "You find yourself opposing some very simple assertion, in a much louder tone of voice than is necessary." Argument was the breath of life to her, and in defense of a theory she was always ready to fight vigorously.

About Miss Lowell's "modern" work it seems almost impossible to have a lukewarm, neutral attitude. One either ardently

admires it or wholly misunderstands and condemns it. But in any case, she is recognized always as a great personality, a living force, a powerful and vigorous leader. Like all persons who feel that they have a message, and who possess the courage and initiative to deliver and defend it, she has been called prejudiced and opinionated. But the prophet has always been stoned. Miss Lowell had the dominant courage that gloried in defending a cause, the buoyant resiliency that must be the shield and buckler of every champion of innovation against hidebound and outworn convention.

She was an iconoclast, not only of ancient forms and cant-words, but of her own inherited personal traditions. Despite her innate New Englandism, she was a modern of moderns. The charm of New England is in her poetry,- the color of the lilac, the fragrance of the apple, but never a reflection of ancient belief or narrow confining prejudice. These meant nothing to her, for she was a writer of the present, seeking nothing from the past but its pictorial quality. She was not a blue-stock-
ing; her work is opulent, full of the savor of life. Beauty she culled everywhere -- from every land and century. But she expressed always restlessness, rebellion against environment. The eighteenth century lady rebels against her stiff brocades, her stays, her patterned garden; the New England farm woman against her monotonous work and silent husband. Very frequently we get this note of revolt against circumstances, as in the lines,

"I never see the towering white clouds roll

Before a sturdy wind, save through the small

Barred window of my jail.

I weary for desires never guessed

For alien passions, strange imaginings,

To be some other person for a day."

Our present age of adjustment, transition, restlessness, and dissatisfaction is perfectly reflected in Miss Lowell's poetry. Her face was turned not to an ordered conventional past, but to a broad free future, which was to grow from the present welter of unrest and change. Could any poet achieve a line more perfectly epitomizing revolt against confining convention than,

"Christ, what are patterns for?"

It is a curious circumstance that the vividness of Miss Lowell's personality, the vigor and ardor with which she defended her theories, have really kept the public from a thorough and intimate knowledge of her poetry. People became acquainted with her through a few examples of her work published in magazines and widely reprinted in newspapers. These poems were often those which seemed most revolutionary, and which therefore gave rise to much discussion. Sometimes, either directly or indirectly they lent themselves to burlesque or flippant comment, as in the lines which went the rounds of the newspapers;

"I want to be a carpenter,

To work all day long in clean wood --

I want to shingle a house

Sitting on the ridgepole in a bright breeze."

Anthologies although representing the best of her work, of necessity limit their choice to a few poems,- almost always the same, in book after book,- and give no idea of her range and versatility. In consequence, readers becoming acquainted with her verse through magazine and anthology, fancied that they knew Amy Lowell, while the great body of her work was really a closed book to them. People do not as a rule understand that vers libre and polyphonic prose form only a part of her literary accomplishment. In her prefaces and her essays of criticism and poetical theory, she explained and defended the modern rhythms so ably and strongly that she unconsciously suggested to the public mind that she wrote nothing else. In reality she has used most effectively all the traditional verse-measures, and forms,- the ballad, the sonnet, the Chaucerian stanza, and couplets as carefully polished as Pope's.

A detailed reading and study of her work not only increases our enjoyment of her poetry and our respect for her art, but reveals to us her extraordinary versatility and breadth of view. In her intellectual outlook she is a citizen of the world. Her catholicity of taste in reading and study is revealed by the variety of her interests and the wide range of the subjects which attract her. Always too we sense her high poetic ideal, the ever-distant goal toward which, as she says, the great gods beckon her. John Keats she hails as "Great Master." In her first volume we find expression of her admiration for the young apostle of beauty who was her inspiration and whose influence on her work was so great. His ideals became hers; she would

lift again the torch of poetry which had fallen from his hands.

"Brave idolatry

Which can conceive a hero!"

In a poem entitled "The Immortals", she ironically and ruefully admits her failure, in spite of tireless effort, to reach the heights, and her sense of inadequacy and defeat in the attainment of her standard.

THE IMMORTALS.

I have read you and read you my betters
Piling high on the clear, brown shelves,
Mountain high your very selves
Disguised in a garb of letters.

I have poked and pried beyond
Seeking past words for how you did it,
While my mind was one tormented fidget,
Like a stone-struck, shallow pond.

I have ravelled your patterns out,
And matched them piece by piece as they were,
Till your hearts flashed again from the erstwhile blur.
Did I know then the rule from the rout?

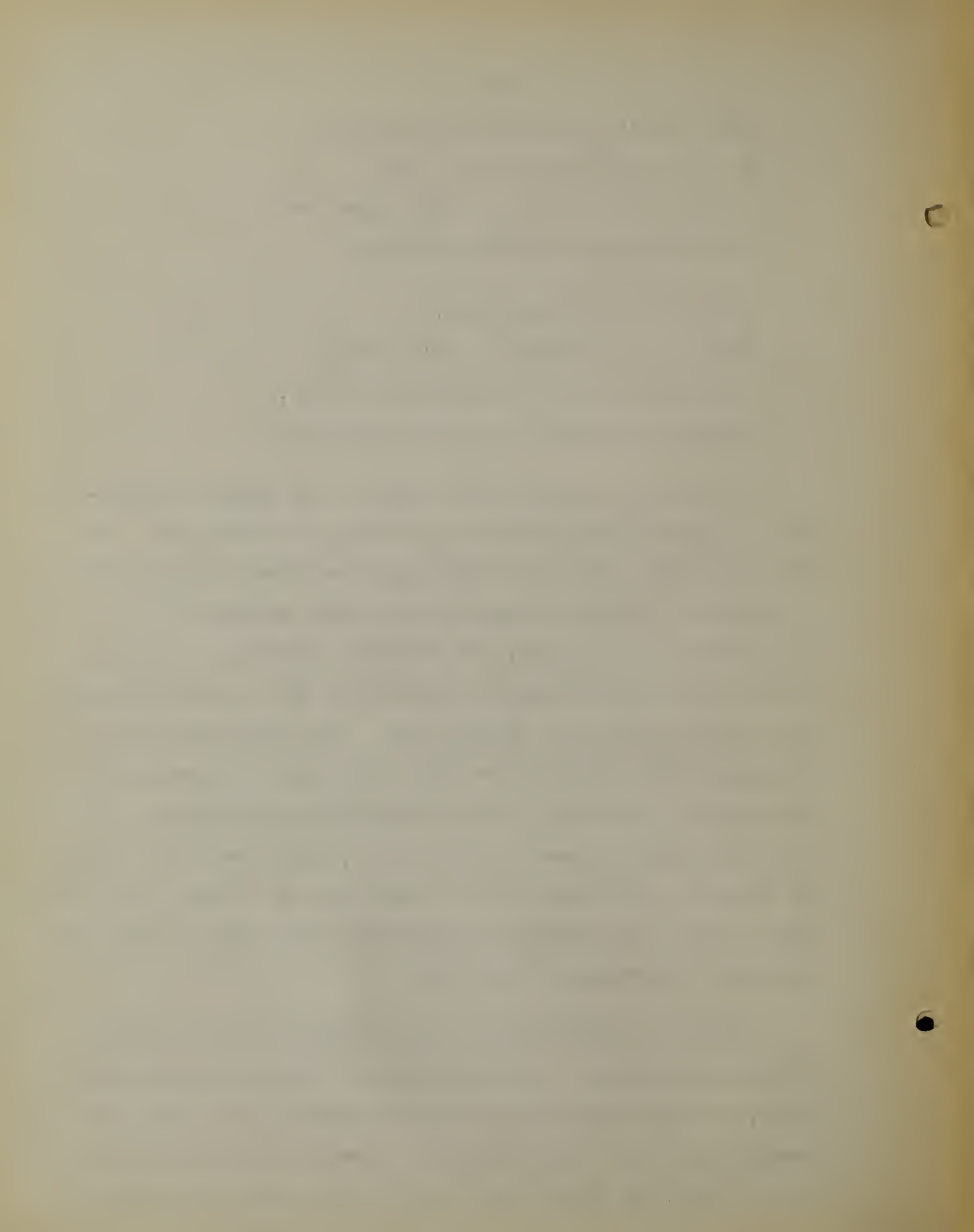
I read you, as I look at the sky,
Gratefully wondering at its fresh-flowing blue.
If I am not, why I am not, so why this to-do?
Must I disqualify?

Well I won't, my masters; so reckon
On the valiant rivalry of a flea.
I should lie to you if I never said "We".
You great gods, why do you beckon?

Clearly the fault is yours,
Flaunting a challenge I can't resist.
I declare my back has a permanent twist,
And my boot straps are counted by scores."

It is hard to know just how much of any notable achievement is due to natural talent and how much to hard work. An old Celtic bard offers the following proportion in explanation of genius:- one-third the gift of the gods, one-third the opportunity of the moment, and one-third the labor of man. No one can deny that Amy Lowell supplied the last in ample measure, full, pressed down, and running over. She was perhaps only averagely gifted, but the robustness and vigor of personality which found expression in able leadership, is revealed no less in the unflagging industry, persistence, and perseverance which she brought to her work from the early days of patient apprenticeship to those last months of unremitting toil which produced the monumental biography of John Keats.

Indeed, the first article in her literary credo was her belief in hard work. In the preface to "Sword Blades and Poppy Seed", in which she discusses several phases of her theory of poetry, she says, (contradicting the popular impression that a poet is born, not made,) that the poet must learn his trade in



the same manner and with the same painstaking care as the cabinet maker. She pays tribute to the French ideal of a perfect technique in poetry, which she considers a reproof to the selfsatisfied laziness of the present-day Anglo-Saxon, who lets a fine idea excuse slovenly workmanship. She argues the point well, but how has it worked out in practice? Does she not usually fall short of the highest poetical expression which, however painstakingly wrought, yet gives the effect of spontaneity? In such lines as these,-

"When I think of you, Beloved,
I see a smooth stately garden
With parterres of gold and crimson tulips
And bursting lilac leaves,"-

we have beautiful images it is true, but we feel the effort, the elaboration, the laborious craftsmanship. Compare these lines with Burns' verses,-

"Oh my luv is like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
Oh my luv is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune,"-

which trill forth with the joyous freedom of a bird song. Granted that there is much of beauty and interest in Miss Lowell's poetry (and I believe that one's appreciation of and respect for her achievement increase upon closer acquaintance with her work), yet we question whether she has ever created a line which will

pass from lip to lip and become the heritage of the race. It is the irony of fate that although she paid such tribute to technique, she has often attained only an effect of formlessness, so that an intelligent critic like Herbert Quick could call her free-verse poems raw material of poetry, rather than finished creations. In the same preface she offers a strong defense for the theory that poetry should not teach, but should simply embody Beauty, because beauty is its own excuse for being. Here she comes into conflict with some of the oldest of precepts. Horace, in his "Ars Poetica", which governed all the writers of the Middle Ages, lays down the law that the purpose of poetry is profit as well as pleasure, "utile et dulce." Sidney, in his "Defense of Poesie", the first book of criticism in English, declares that that poetry is best which "is full of a notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach." A few years later, Ben Jonson says that "the end of poetry is delightful teaching."

However, there is nothing new in Miss Lowell's position. It is the theory which Oscar Wilde epitomized in the expression, "Art for Art's sake," when in the Nineties he led the revolt against Ruskin's demand that the aesthetic must build on an ethical basis. Wilde said, "Love Art for Art's sake and all things will be added to you. Beauty is the only thing which Time cannot harm. Philosophies fall away like sand, creeds follow one another, but what is beautiful is a joy for all seasons, a possible possession for all eternity." Miss Lowell is quite as strong in her pronouncement, and much more modern.

She assails as ridiculous, timid, and vulgar those who would tag a beautiful work of art with Salvation Army texts of morality, or stud a masterpiece with nails to hang therefrom uplifting sentiments; and she suggests that we learn from the Universe which flings down its continents and seas and leaves them without comment. Again we feel that Miss Lowell is arguing fallaciously. An inanimate thing cannot teach; when we speak of its doing so we simply mean that man, a conscious being, sees therein the symbol of some truth and employs that symbolism to teach the truth. Miss Lowell says that we do not ask a tree to teach us moral lessons. Granted, yet many men have learned from it the lesson conveyed in Kilmer's line,-
"Only God can make a tree."

Moreover, long before Horace ever crystallized into a precept the idea of "Utile et dulce" in connection with poetry, poets had taught and taught pleasurable;- in spite of all theories to the contrary they will probably continue to do so till the end of time. It is true, perhaps, that a poem need have only aesthetic appeal to be a great poem; but is there any reason why another poem with ethical and intellectual appeal as well may not also be great? Is there not moral beauty?

Although Miss Lowell is almost belligerent in her advocacy of the Art for Art's sake theory, yet she is restrained in its application, perhaps by her Puritan inheritance. In her first volume, "The Dome of Many Colored Glass," we frequently observe a moral tone, but this book was published before she had become a theorist. In her later work it is interesting to find, as we

sometimes do, poems which seem to have a moral basis. In "Pickthorn Manor", for example, there is a recognition of the power of duty and the tragic results of infringement of the moral law.

Miss Lowell's work as a theorist is, for the most part, in the field of technique; it is interesting to note, however, that she does not consider this the essential element in poetry. She closes the preface to "Sword Blades and Poppy Seed" by calling attention to the fact that therein she has discussed questions of technique only; for the "more important part of the book," she adds, "the poems must speak for themselves."

On the purely technical side, she acknowledges her debt to the French, who, she feels, have produced a poetry more finely wrought than that of any other nation. At the time this statement was made, she was at work on her "Six French Poets" in preparation for which she made so careful a study of French verse that she is competent to speak with authority. She pays tribute to the high ideals of French writers, who with untiring zeal are constantly seeking new and striking images, and undertaking all sorts of metrical experiments in order that their readers may respond to the poignancy of their thought. Here we find the origin of her interest in imagism and in verse forms, the two phases of verse technique to which she gave thereafter so much time and study.

From her study of the French arose her conception of poetry as a living, vital force. The contrast between this ideal of poetry and the time-worn conventions of the art is comparable to

the contrast between a tree putting forth new blossoms in the spring, and a collection of pressed flowers, beautiful, perhaps, but stiff and lifeless, incapable of growth or change. Amy Lowell was devoted to growth and change; her bete noir was always the trite, the time-worn, the cantword, the cliché; against them she launched her fiercest attacks.

Her interest in versification having been given impetus and direction by her study of French poetry, she became the most energetic and inveterate of experimenters. Her trip to Europe in 1914 brought her into contact with that little group of literary radicals, who, finding kinship of poetic creed, had gathered under the leadership of Ezra Pound into a definite school, the Imagists. Their special interests, like Miss Lowell's, lay in creating new rhythms and demonstrating the power of diction to vitalize poetry. She subscribed to their tenets and became one of their number. Their first anthology, "Des Imagists," published that same year, contained one of her poems, and when, the next year, Pound withdrew, she reorganized the group and inspired the succeeding anthologies. In the preface to "Some Imagist Poets," the 1915 Anthology, their artistic creed, resolved into six articles, is set forth as follows:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the merely decorative word.
2. To create new rhythms--as the expression of new moods--and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for

championship of the cause by Amy Lowell. At any rate, the controversy focused the attention of the literary world on the Imagists and turned the search-light of criticism on their creed. Analyzed, imagism would seem to be but a phase of the more widespread movement of naturalism. Little, if any fault, can be found in the tenets of Imagism, yet one might follow them to the letter and not achieve poetry, for real poetry cannot be made by rule. Indeed we have Coleridge's testimony that, "images however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet." Miss Lowell was an ardent Imagist in theory, but in practice she was something more; whereas, some of the school simply made images, she really wrote poems. However, in the volumes of verse which she published after her espousal of imagism, its influence is very evident. The two poems quoted below are in good imagist style:

AUGUST

Late afternoon

Smoke-colour, rose, saffron,
With a hard edge chipping the blue sky,
And a great cloud hung over the village,
And the white-painted meeting-house,
And the steeple with the gilded weather-cock
Heading and flashing to the wind.

it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms.

3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.
4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.
5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

There is certainly nothing very original here, nor yet anything startling or revolutionary; in fact the Imagists made no such claims but declared their principles to be simply the "essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature." But this credo aroused a storm of controversy hard to account for, unless, perhaps, the explanation lies in the vigorous

OPAL

You are ice and fire,
The touch of you burns my hands like snow.
You are cold and flame.
You are the crimson of amaryllis,
The silver of moon-touched magnolias.
When I am with you,
My heart is a frozen pond
Gleaming with agitated torches.

The day of the Imagist has gone by; the group has separated; their work is already dated, a thing of the past. In a discussion of contemporary poetry in the Yale Review of July, 1925, Untermeyer pronounces both imagism and naturalism, as movements, dead. He humoursly describes the modern poet, who disappointed in Imagism, distrustful of old-fashioned romanticism, and "ill adjusted to a world that changes faster than he dreams, wavers between a hard clarity of vision and the doubtful boon of rose-tinted spectacles."

Miss Lowell is best known as a great leader and pioneer in modern verse forms. But though her name is so intimately associated with vers libre and the other unconventional rhythms of contemporary poetry, she was by no means opposed to the traditional measures. She endlessly experimented with new forms and generally used the freer rhythms, but she pleaded for the poet's freedom to employ any rhythm or combination of rhythms which

would best express the emotion which he strove to communicate. She herself was well practiced in the various traditional modes of meter and rhyme. In her first volume, "The Dome of Many Colored Glass," all the poems, with one exception, are written in standard verse forms; her later work, of course, is almost entirely in free verse or in polyphonic prose, but she turns occasionally to the older forms, and we note a steady increase of power and flexibility in their use. Despite her unwillingness to be limited by the artificial restrictions of conventional patterns, she has written many sonnets, some of which are very fine and show a mastery of this most highly perfected form. At first she keeps strictly to the Petrarchan model, but soon we find her experimenting and originating a form which has an Italian octave and an Elizabethan sestet, closing with the rhymed couplet. All the later sonnets are of this model. The sonnet which I am quoting is the last of a series of six written in honor of Duse. It has a two-fold interest: first, as illustrating how effectively Miss Lowell has used the sonnet form; and secondly, because as the last poem in the posthumous volume, "What's O'Clock," it marks the end of her contribution to poetry, unless, as the Reviews are intimating, new volumes are in process of preparation.

DUSE

VI

Seeing you stand once more before my eyes
In your pale dignity and tenderness,

Waring your frailty like a misty dress
Draped over the great glamour which denies
To years their domination, all disguise
Time can achieve is but to add a stress,
A finer fineness, as though some caress
Touched you a moment to a strange surprise.
Seeing you after these long lengths of years,
I only know the glory come again,
A majesty bewildered by my tears,
A golden sun spangling slant shafts of rain,
Moonlight delaying by a sick man's bed,
A rush of daffodils where wastes of dried leave spread.

"The Dream of St Ursula", "The Little Garden", "A Petition", "Irony", and "Tulip Garden" are illustrations of her success in using the sonnet form as the expression of widely varying conceptions.

The poems in rhyming couplets are frequent, the measure being sometimes the heroic couplet, but oftener the hexameter line as in "The Red Lacquer Music Stand," where this conventional form is admirably suited to the description, as it connotes the idea of artificial, patterned beauty, "quaintly wrought."

THE RED LACQUER MUSIC-STAND

A music-stand of crimson lacquer, long since brought
In some fast clipper-ship from China, quaintly wrought
With bossed and carven flowers and fruits in blackening
gold,

The slender shaft all twined about and thickly scrolled
With vine leaves and young twisted tendrils, whirling,
curling,

Flinging their new shoots over the four wings, and
swirling

Out on the three wide feet in golden lumps and streams;
Petals and apples in high relief, and where the seams
Are worn with handling, through the polished crimson
sheen,

Long streaks of black, the under lacquer, shine out
clean.

We find, too, that Miss Lowell has used with ease and skill, blank verse, the ballad measure, and the Chaucerian stanza or Rime Royal, as though to give the lie to those critics who would maintain that she could write only in irregular rhythms. But, notwithstanding the extraordinary range of forms which she has used successfully, her name will probably always be most closely associated with free verse because she was so much before the public as its champion.

Miss Lowell tells us that the term "vers libre" has in French a somewhat different connotation from the English translation "free verse", and she suggests the expression "unrhymed cadence", as much more accurately descriptive of the form as it is used in English versification. But language cannot be made to order, and the name "free verse" had come into our language to stay. Miss Lowell evidently realized this as in her later discussions she herself does not use the term "unrhymed cadence"

but always "vers libre." She never permits herself to speak of "free verse."

Her exposition of the nature and possibilities of "unrhymed cadence" is simple and direct. She explains that it is a natural rhythm, founded upon the organic rhythm of the speaking voice with its necessity for breathing, and not upon a strict metrical system. It has more stress and curve than the rhythm of prose, but not the heavy stress nor exceedingly marked curve of the regular meters. Cadence is far more subtle and less easily perceived than meter, but nothing is more erroneous than the rather common idea that chopping prose into lines of unequal length produces vers libre, for free verse is governed by laws of both form and harmony. But, because it is not restricted by the very definite metrical laws of the classic meters, it expresses more effectively the "white-hot quality" of the modern temper. Moreover, its flexibility makes possible a constant variation of cadence as the feeling and tempo of the poem change. Miss Lowell's finest poem, "Patterns", employs vers libre so skilfully that it offers a strong argument for all its author has claimed for it. The poem is a powerful protest against conventions of all kinds. A tragic battle between restraint and passion is fought against the background of a beautiful, patterned, eighteenth century garden. The constantly changing cadence and the carefully chosen imagery intensify the emotion and vitalize the thought. At the beginning of the poem, rhythm and diction are delicately and finely suited to picture for us the garden and the lady--both rigidly conventional.

"I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

It is interesting to note how completely the altered rhythm reflects her passionate revolt, and her vision of a happier, freer existence:

"What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon
the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.
I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the
paths,
And he would stumble after,
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt
and the buckles on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover.

Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body
as he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid."

But the dream ends; there is no escape for the lady of the
brocade. Protesting, vainly rebelling, forever she is to be
repressed and imprisoned by "patterns". Rhythm and diction
close in upon us insistently and oppressively, till we, too,
could shriek her final cry of protest. She says:

"In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters,
and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed
And the softness of my body will be guarded from
embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,

In a pattern called a war.

Christ! What are patterns for?

In the quiet restraint of "A Lady", we have an equally effective use of the vers libre. This beautiful portrait in half-tones is really an appreciation of the product of those very conventions and artificialities of life against which Patterns is so strong a protest.

A LADY

You are beautiful and faded
Like an old opera tune
Played upon a harpsichord;
Or like the sun-flooded silks
Of an eighteenth-century boudoir.
In your eyes
Smoulder the fallen roses of out-lived minutes,
And the perfume of your soul
Is vague and suffusing,
With the pungence of sealed spice-jars.
Your half-tones delight me,
And I grow mad with gazing
At your blent colours.
My vigour is a new-minted penny,
Which I cast at your feet.
Gather it up from the dust,
That its sparkle may amuse you."

These poems illustrate free verse at its best and are sug-

gestive of its splendid possibilities. But there are times when the poet is lost in the innovator, with the result that she offers us not poems but experiments. Absolute freedom in the choice of subject and in the use of the exact word explains, but does not excuse, the following lines:

"The electric clock jerks every half-minute:

"Coming!--Past!"

"Three beef-steaks and a chicken-pie,"

Bawled through a slide while the clock jerks
heavily.

A man carries a china mug of coffee to a distant
chair.

Two rice puddings and a salmon salad
Are pushed over the counter;

The unfulfilled chairs open to receive them."

However, it is not often that Miss Lowell becomes so completely lost in the maze of theory, and most of her poems in vers libre are arguments in favor of this form which she so ardently sponsored. At least she is always intelligible. We never find in her volumes absurd enigmas like "Tender Buttons" by Gertrude Stein; Miss Lowell had always her saving grace of common sense.

"The Cremona Violin" is interesting as an illustration of Miss Lowell's theory that, whereas, some emotions and ideas are best expressed in unrhymed cadences, others lend themselves to rhyme and regular meters. The story of the poem is told in the severe Chaucerian stanza, while the notes of the violin rise and fall in the undulating cadence of vers libre.

"Above all things, above Charlotta his wife,
Herr Altgelt loved his violin, a fine
Cremona pattern, Stradivari's life
Was flowering out of early discipline
When this was fashioned. Of soft-cutting pine
The belly was. The back of broadly curled
Maple, the head made thick and sharply whirled.

* * * * *

Herr Concert-Meister Altgelt played,
And the four strings of his violin
Were spinning like bees on a day in Spring
The notes rose into the wide sun-mote
Which slanted through the window,
They lay like coloured beads a-row,
They knocked together and parted,
And started to dance,
Skipping, tripping, each one slipping
Under and over the others so
That the polychrome fire streamed like a lance
Or a comet's tail,
Behind them.
Then a wail arose--crescendo--
And dropped from off the end of the bow,
And the dancing stopped.
A scent of lilies filled the room,
Long and slow. Each large white bloom

Breathed a sound which was holy perfume from a blessed
censer,

And the hum of an organ tone,

And they waved like fans in a hall of stone

Over a bier standing there in the center, alone.

Each lily bent slowly as it was blown.

Like smoke they rose from the violin-

Then faded as a swifter bowing

Jumbled the notes like wavelets flowing

In a splashing, pashing, rippling motion

Between broad meadows to an ocean

Wide as a day and blue as a flower,

Where every hour

Gulls dipped, and scattered, and squawked, and squealed,

And over the marshes the Angelus pealed,

And the prows of the fishing-boats were spattered

With spray.

And away a couple of frigates were starting

To race to Java with all sails set,

Topgallants, and royals, and stunsails, and jibs,

And wide moonsails; and the shining rails

Were polished so bright they sparked in the sun."

Miss Lowell's most original contribution to English
versification is her development of polyphonic prose. Her
interest in this form began in her study of the work of Paul
Fort, who printed his poems as prose. In applying Fort's

theory to English poetry she has really created an entirely new form, the characteristics of which she has carefully explained in the preface to "Can Grande's Castle." The title, polyphonic prose, she considers rather misleading, for although it is based on the long flowing cadences of oratorical prose, it is in no sense a prose form. Prose simply refers to its mechanical prose-like arrangement in sentences and paragraphs with no division into lines. Polyphonic, "many-voiced," is applied to the form because it employs all the 'voices' of poetry,-- meter, cadence, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and return. Return is explained as meaning the irregular recurrence of dominant thoughts and images. "Only read it aloud, gentle reader," says Miss Lowell, "and you will see what you will see." Perhaps she would better have said, "You will hear what you will hear," for the effect is of the "many voices" blended into an orchestral harmony. The passage quoted gives an idea of the possibilities of this form, its richness, flexibility, and variety.

"Red tiles, yellow stucco, layer upon layer of windows, roofs, and balconies, Naples pushed up the hill away from the curving bay. A red, half-closed eye, Vesuvius watches and waits.

In her great house with the red marble stairway, Lady Hamilton holds brilliant sway. From her boudoir

windows she can see the bay, and on the left,
hanging here, a flame in a cresset, the blood-red
glare of Vesuvius staring at the clear blue air.
Blood-red on a night of stars, red like a wound
with lava scars. In the round wall-mirrors of
her boudoir, is the blackness of the bay, the
whiteness of a star, and the bleeding redness of
the mountain's core. Nothing more! All night
long, in the mirrors nothing more. Black water,
red stain, and above a star with its silver rain.

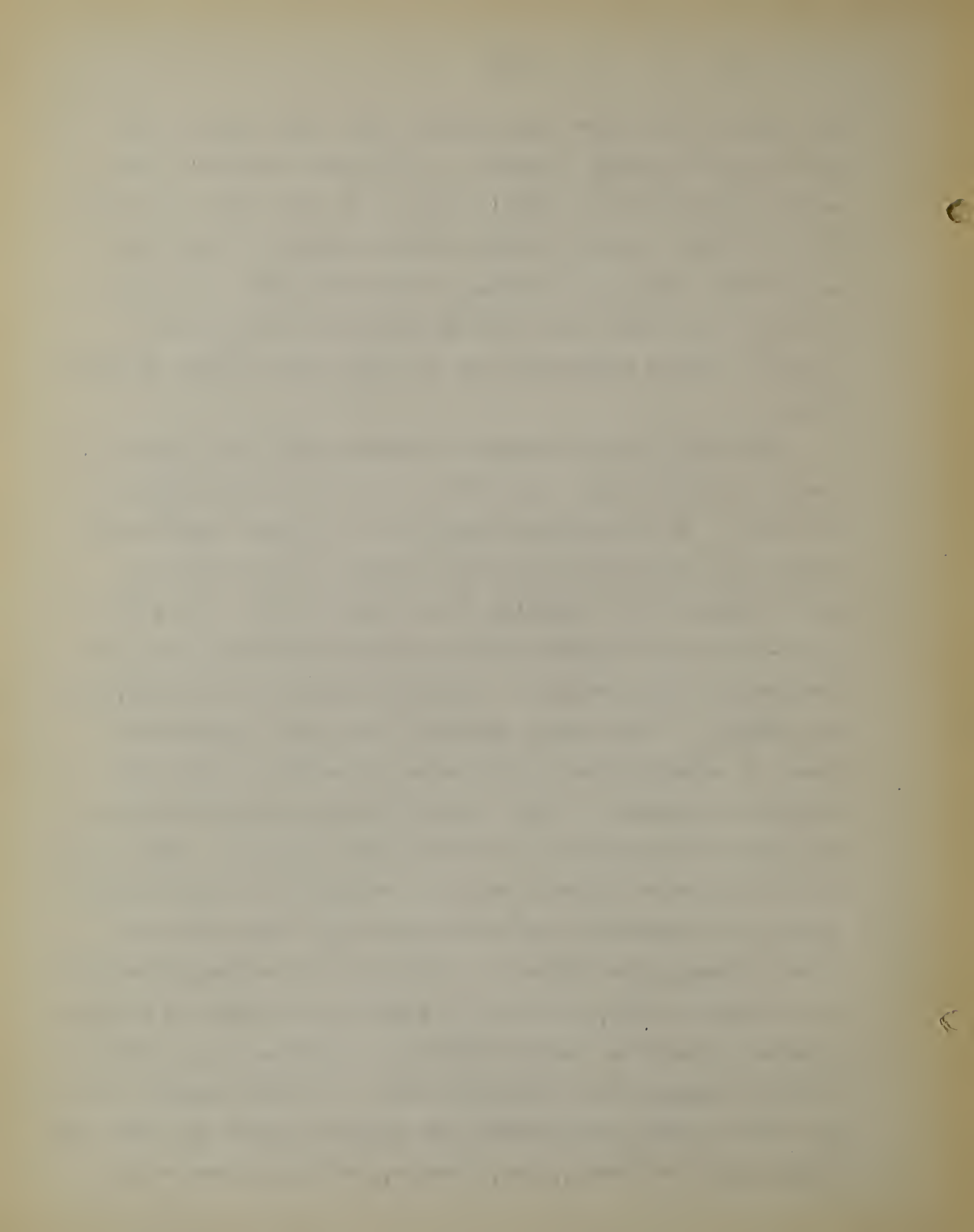
Proud Lady Hamilton! Superb Lady Hamilton!

Quivering bloodswept, vivid Lady Hamilton!

But despite all that can be said in support of polyphonic
prose and its potentialities as a new and powerful medium of
expression, it has shared the fate of imagism and has already
become a thing of the past. Its outstanding weakness is its
extreme self-consciousness. Even as skilfully as Miss Lowell
often employs it, there are passages where one feels the presence
of not one, but all, the "voices", an accumulation of riches
betraying such careful labor as to destroy all effect of natural-
ness or spontaneity. At present it is an almost unused form,
and we wonder whether it could ever come to be generally employed.
It was, however, a daring and fruitful experiment which has en-
riched our literature with glowing pictures and splendid harmonies.
Doubtless it is too soon to say that it is dead. Probably a
truer figure would picture it as an unused harp, silent since

the death of its owner, and awaiting some other hand to wake its soundless strings to music. One thinks of Moore's harp which "hangs as mute on Tara's walls as if that soul were dead." At the moment, our poets appear to be reverting to the more conventional meters and rhythms of an earlier art. But the movement which Miss Lowell led and encouraged has given to poetry a renewed impulse of life and vigor which cannot be fruitless.

Her daring and originality in breaking away from the past, however, account only in part for the vitality and strength of her work. Her remarkable sensitivity to sensuous impressions enabled her to perceive and create Beauty, as her technical skill enabled her to enshrine it in forms of Art. The truly pagan-like love of beauty, which she shared with Keats, is her most marked characteristic. Moreover, her rich vocabulary, and her ability to "make words obedient", give her a remarkable power of communicating to the reader the beauty to which her being has responded. Color has for her the strongest appeal, and many of her poems are a veritable riot of hues. There seems to be no limit to the wide range and variety of her use of color images as an appeal to the imagination,--the iris tints of a bird's plumage, the glitter of copper, the ever-changing radiance of an abalone shell, the red of a sunshade, the flame of a tulip, the green gleam of an emerald fastening a sash,--are but a few of a myriad examples which might be cited. We would mention, too, the great variety of materials and objects on which she bases the color appeal,--flowers, gems, fabrics, metals, pottery,-- all



contribute to produce the effect of beauty. The loveliness of rich fabrics has a particular fascination for Miss Lowell;- the moon seems to her like glistening satin, and with Li T'ai-Po she would exclaim:

"From old days until now, people who can really see
with their eyes are few,
Those who understand and speak of a clear river as
being bright as silk."

It is not only in the glory of the world she sees, that Miss Lowell finds loveliness. She revels in the softness and warmth of fur; she delights in the fragrance of garden flowers or the scent of rich perfumery; she hears music in the rustle of the oak leaves in the wind or in the patter of raindrops. She says of herself,

"There are sights I see and sounds I hear
Which ruffle me like water as they flow."

To illustrate this eager response to beauty, I have chosen three poems from "Pictures of The Floating World."

MISE EN SCENE

"When I think of you, Beloved,
I see a smooth and stately garden
With parterres of gold and crimson tulips
And bursting lilac leaves.
There is a low-lipped basin in the midst,
Where a statue of veined cream marble
Perpetually pours water over her shoulder
From a rounded urn.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is pointed out that the study of history is not only a means of understanding the past, but also a means of understanding the present and the future. The author argues that the study of history is essential for the development of a nation and for the well-being of its people.

The second part of the paper discusses the role of the government in the development of the United States. It is pointed out that the government has played a significant role in the development of the country, and that its actions have had a profound impact on the lives of its citizens. The author argues that the government should continue to play a role in the development of the country, and that its actions should be guided by the principles of justice and fairness.

The third part of the paper discusses the role of the individual in the development of the United States. It is pointed out that the individual has played a significant role in the development of the country, and that his or her actions have had a profound impact on the lives of others. The author argues that the individual should continue to play a role in the development of the country, and that his or her actions should be guided by the principles of justice and fairness.

The fourth part of the paper discusses the role of the future in the development of the United States. It is pointed out that the future is a time of great opportunity, and that it is up to us to make the most of it. The author argues that we should continue to strive for a better future, and that our actions should be guided by the principles of justice and fairness.

The fifth part of the paper discusses the role of the present in the development of the United States. It is pointed out that the present is a time of great challenge, and that it is up to us to meet it. The author argues that we should continue to strive for a better present, and that our actions should be guided by the principles of justice and fairness.

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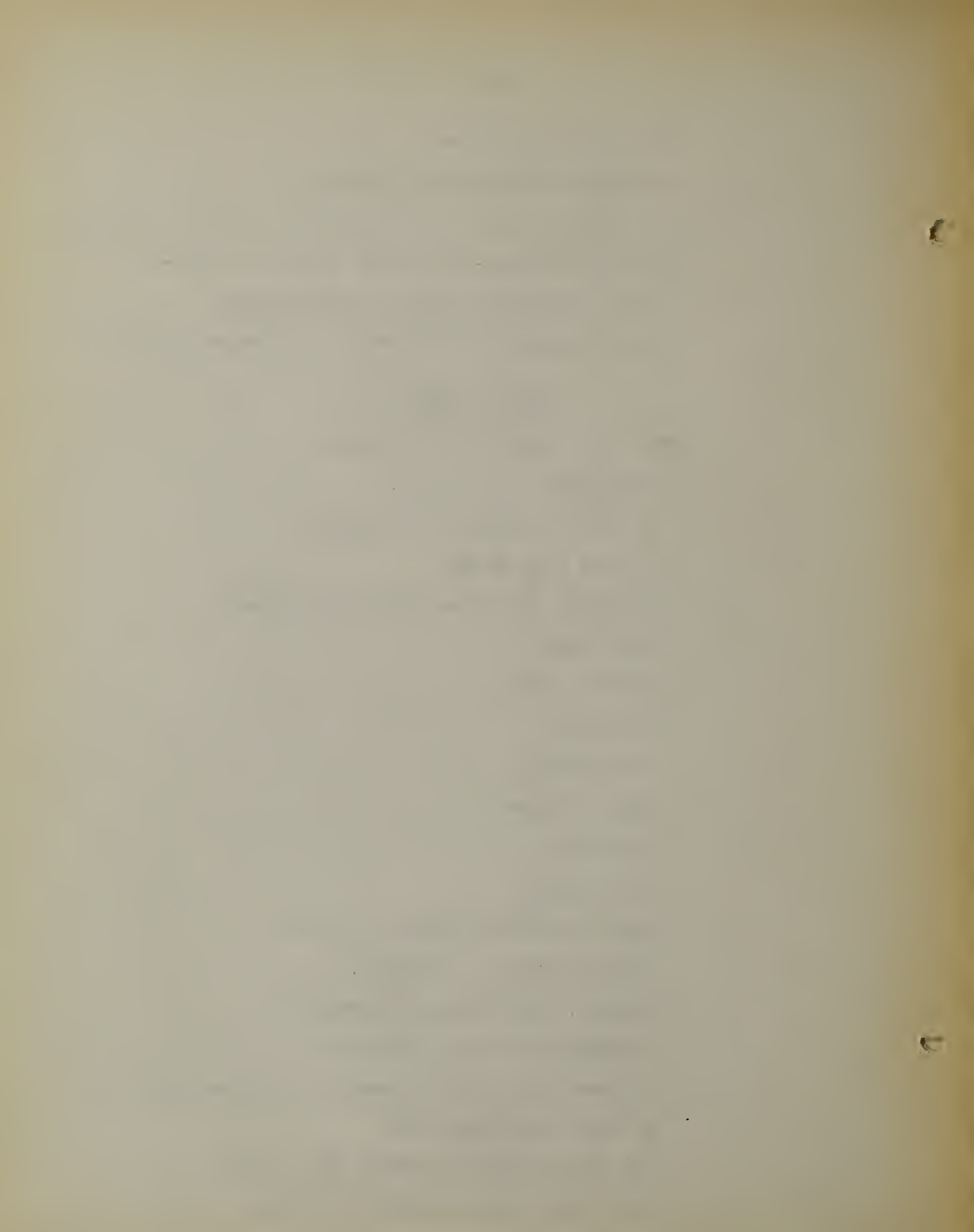
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When the wind blows,
The water-stream blows before it
And spatters into the basin with a light tinkling,
And your shawl--the colour of red violets--
Flares out behind you in great curves
Like the swirling draperies of a painted Madonna."

AFTER A STORM

"You walk under the ice trees.
They sway, and crackle,
And arch themselves splendidly
To deck your going.
The white sun flips them into colour
Before you.
They are blue,
And mauve,
And emerald.
They are amber,
And jade,
And sardonyx.
They are silver fretted to flame
And startled to stillness,
Bunched, splintered, iridescent.
You walk under the ice trees
And the bright snow creaks as you step upon it.
My dogs leap about you,
And their barking strikes upon the air
Like sharp hammer-strokes on metal.



You walk under the ice trees
But you are more dazzling than the ice flowers,
And the dogs' barking
Is not so loud to me as your quietness.

You walk under the ice trees
At ten o'clock in the morning.

OMBRE CHINOISE

"Red foxgloves against a yellow wall streaked with plum-
coloured shadows;
A lady with a blue and red sunshade.
The slow dash of waves upon a parapet.
That is all.
Non-existent--immortal-
As solid as the centre of a ring of fine gold."

In connection with the use of the auditory appeal, there is one interesting phase which must be mentioned. Often the reference to sound is merely incidental, the song of a bird, or the creaking of the bright snow underfoot, but in several poems we find a very interesting attempt to correlate music and poetry. In "Stravinsky's Three Pieces 'Grotesques', for String Quartet," Miss Lowell has tried to transcribe the various movements into verse--but with indifferent success.

FIRST MOVEMENT.

Thin-voiced nasal pipes
Drawing sound out and out
Until it is a screeching thread,

Sharp and cutting, sharp and cutting

It hurts.

Whee-e-e!

Bump! Bump! Tong-ti-bump!

There are drums here,

Banging,

And wooden shoes beating the round, gray stones

Of the market-place.

Whee-e-e!

Sabots slapping the worn, old stones,

And a shaking and cracking of dancing bones;

Clumsy and hard they are,

And uneven,

Losing half a beat

Because the stones are slippery.

Bump-ety-tong! Whee-e-e! Tong!

SECOND MOVEMENT.

Pale violin music whiffs across the moon,

A pale smoke of violin music blows over the moon,

Cherry petals fall and flutter,

And the white Pierrot,

Wreathed in the smoke of the violins,

Splashed with cherry petals falling, falling,

Claws a grave for himself in the fresh earth

With his finger-nails.

THIRD MOVEMENT.

An organ growls in the heavy roof-groins of
a church,
It wheezes and coughs.
The nave is blue with incense,
Writhing, twisting,
Snaking over the heads of the chanting priests.
"Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine."

"After Hearing a Walz by Bartok" is a hysterical narrative poem, in which the whole horrible story of a murder is reconstructed. To the gruesome recital the rhythmic swing and triple beat of the waltz makes an incongruous and dreadful accompaniment.

"I killed him! My God! Don't you hear?
I shook him until his red tongue
Hung flapping out through the black, queer
Swollen lines of his lip, and I clung
With my nails drawing blood, while I flung
The loose, heavy body in fear."

The most successful of Miss Lowell's attempts to translate music into verse rhythm is in "The Cremona Violin", where, as I have already explained, the cadence of the violin is reproduced by skilful changes of rhythm.

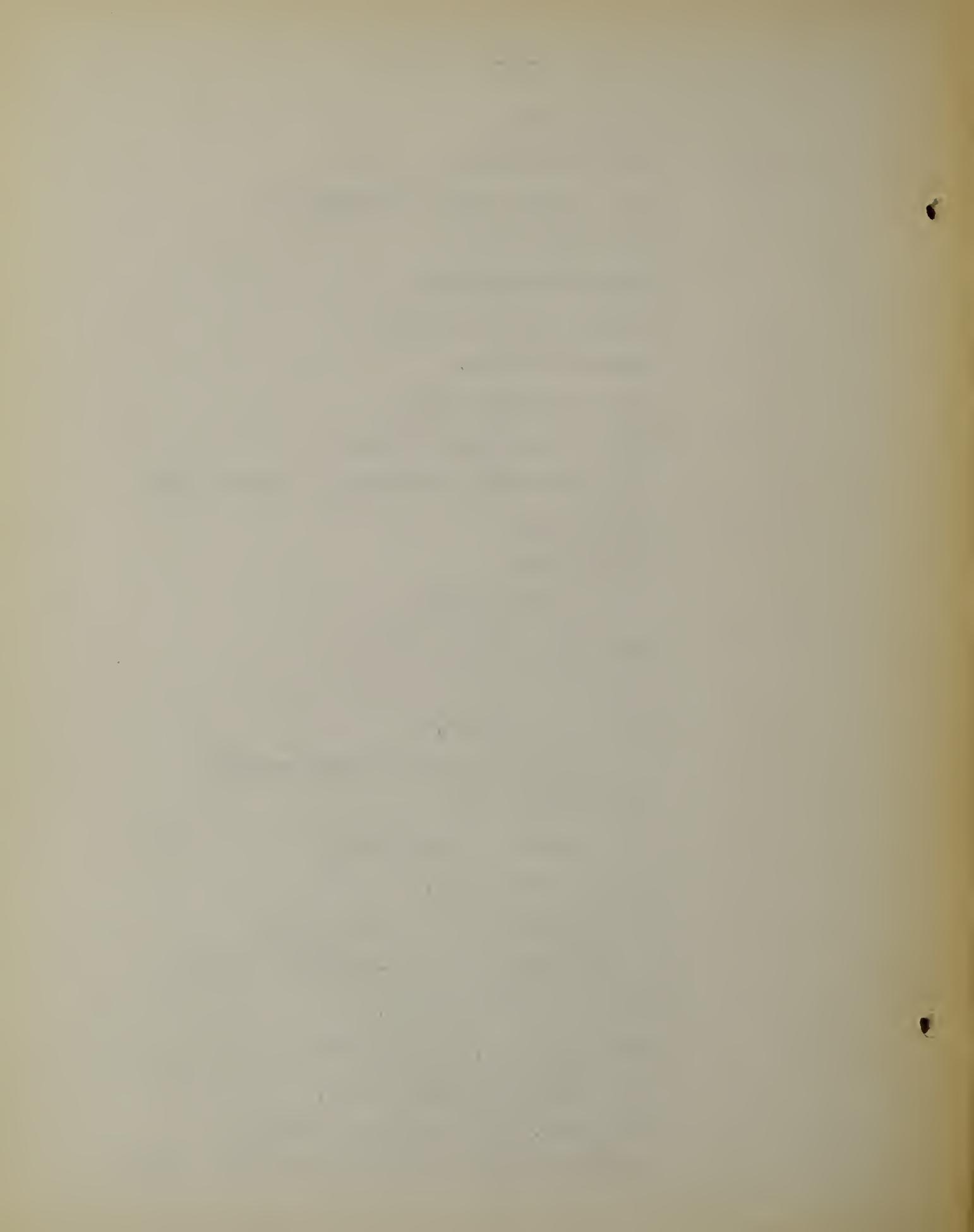
Miss Lowell finds delight also in beauty and grace of form and motion,--in the curves of swirling draperies of a painted Madonna, in the rippled reflections of quiet water, in the

sinuous crouching of a panther. The undulating movement of a fish, its swift straightenings, and sudden dartings, fascinate her no less than does the glory of its iridescent coloring. In such poems as "The Aquarium" and "The Pike", we get the impression of graceful motion and flashing color so strongly that we forget our feeling that the subjects are incongruous for poetry.

AN AQUARIUM

"Streaks of green and yellow iridescence,
Silver shiftings,
Rings veering out of rings,
Silver--gold--
Grey-green opaqueness sliding down,
With sharp white bubbles
Shooting and dancing,
Flinging quickly outward.
Nosing the bubbles,
Swallowing them,
Fish.
Blue shadows against silver-saffron water,
The light rippling over them
In steel-bright tremors.
Outspread translucent fins
Flute, fold, and relapse;
The threaded light prints through them on the pebbles
In scarcely tarnished twinklings.
Curving of spotted spines,

Slow up-shifts,
Lazy convolutions:
Then a sudden swift straightening
And darting below:
Oblique grey shadows
Athwart a pale casement.
Roped and curled,
Green man-eating eels
Slumber in undulate rhythms,
With crests laid horizontal on their backs.
Barred fish,
Striped fish,
Uneven disks of fish,
Slip, slide, whirl, turn,
And never touch.
Metallic blue fish,
With fins wide and yellow and swaying
Like Oriental fans,
Hold the sun in their bellies
And glow with light:
Blue brilliance cut by black bars.
An oblong pane of straw-coloured shimmer,
Across it, in a tangent,
A smear of rose, black, silver.
Short twists and upstartings,
Rose-black, in a setting of bubbles:
Sunshine playing between red and black flowers



On a blue and gold lawn.
Shadows and polished surfaces,
Facets of mauve and purple,
A constant modulation of values.
Shaft-shaped,
With green bead eyes;
Thick-nosed,
Heliotrope-coloured;
Swift spots of chrysolite and coral;
In the midst of green, pearl, amethyst irradiations.

Outside,
A willow-tree flickers
With little white jerks
And long blue waves
Rise steadily beyond the outer islands.

THE PIKE.

In the brown water,
Thick and silver-sheened in the sunshine,
Liquid and cool in the shade of the reeds,
A pike dozed.
Lost among the shadows of stems
He lay unnoticed.
Suddenly he flicked his tail,
And a green-and-copper brightness
Ran under the water.

Out from under the reeds
Came the olive-green light,
And orange flashed up
Through the sun-thickened water.
So the fish passed across the pool,
Green and copper,
A darkness and a gleam,
And the blurred reflections of the willows on the
 opposite bank
Received it.

Throughout all the volumes there is the same pagan tribute to beauty; the same strong sensuous appeal; but thought content or deep spiritual significance seem almost entirely lacking. With Fra Lippo Lippi she exclaims:

"The beauty and the wonder and the power
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and
 shades,
Changes, surprises,--and---

but here she stops short. "And God made it all," forms no part of her creed. Responsive as she is to the beauty of the world about her, we miss in her poems the inspiration of a religious or even a meditative interpretation of Nature. All is sense impression,--sense impression, too, of a vigorous and stimulating quality rather than anything delicate and subtle.

Running all through her poems is her love of gardens, that inherited love which is almost a passion. Her gardens are

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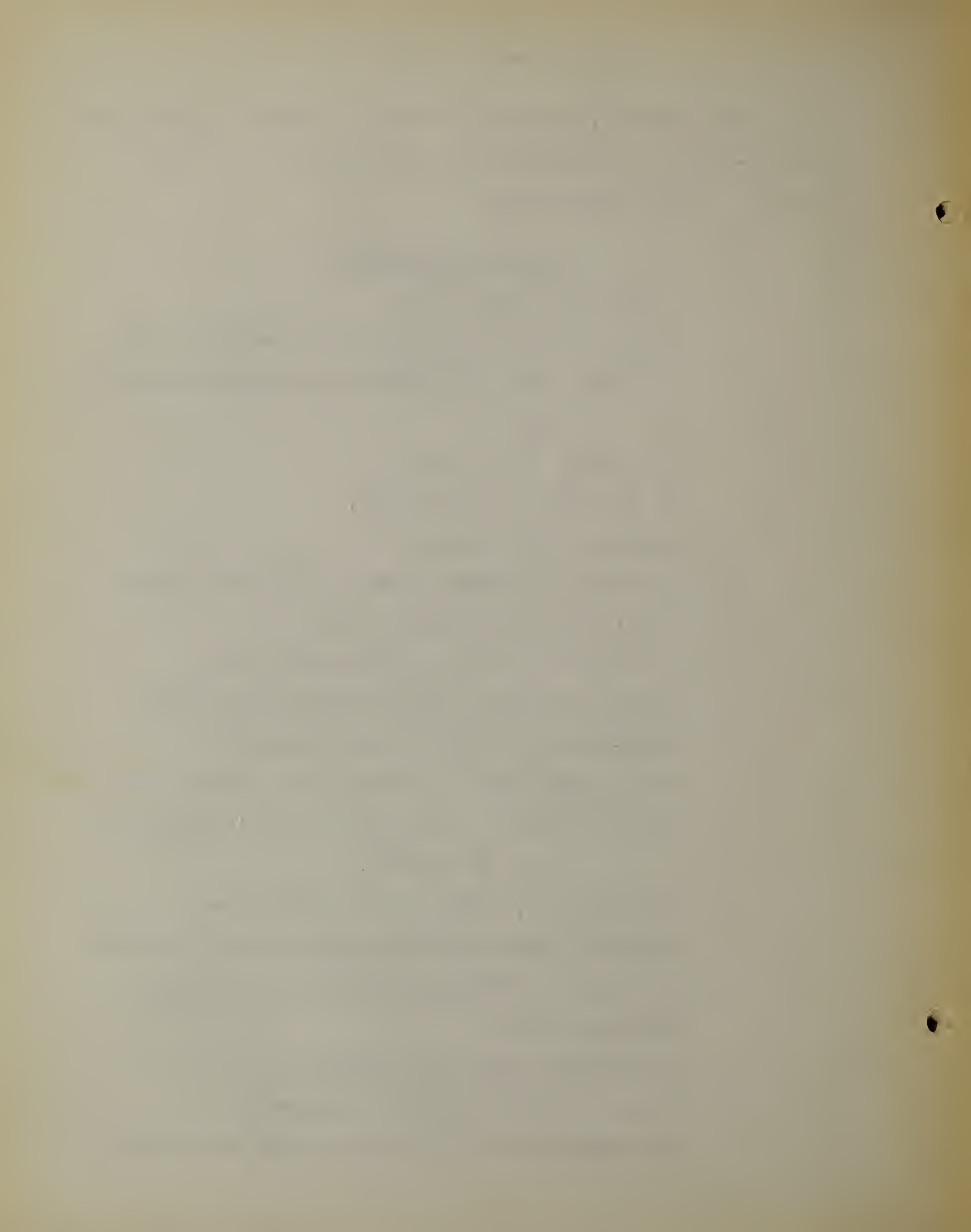
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1919

bright with flowers, especially the more colorful blossoms and the old-fashioned varieties, such as she shows us in the familiar "Garden By Moonlight."

GARDEN BY MOONLIGHT

"A black cat among roses,
Phlox, lilac-misted under a first-quarter moon,
The sweet smells of heliotrope and night-scented
stock.
The garden is very still,
It is dazed with moonlight,
Contented with perfume,
Dreaming the opium dreams of its folded poppies.
Firefly lights open and vanish
High as the tip buds of the golden glow,
Low as the sweet alyssum flowers at my feet.
Moon-shimmer on leaves and trellises,
Moon-spikes shafting through the snow-ball bush.
Only the little faces of the ladies' delight are
alert and staring,
Only the cat, padding between the roses,
Shakes a branch and breaks the chequered pattern
As water is broken by the falling of a leaf.
Then you come,
And you are quiet like the garden,
And white like the alyssum flowers,
And beautiful as the silent sparks of the fireflies."



The patterned garden of the eighteenth century is, as we have seen, the basis of the symbolism of her finest poem, and it is often the formal garden that she pictures, - smooth and stately gardens", with marble statues, basined fountains, and shaded seats. Her own favorite poem, which she selected to read at what proved to be her last public appearance, is "Lilacs", a really beautiful tribute to our own New England springtime blossom.

LILACS

May is lilac here in New England,
May is a thrush singing, 'Sun-up!' on
a tip-top ash-tree,
May is white clouds behind pine-trees
Puffed out and marching upon a blue sky.
May is a green as no other,
May is much sun through small leaves,
May is soft earth,
And apple-blossoms,
And windows open to a South wind.
May is a full light wind of lilac
From Canada to Narragansett Bay.
Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Colour of lilac,
Heart-leaves of lilac all over New England,
Roots of lilac under all the soil of New England.

Sometimes the garden glows in bright sunlight, sometimes it is misty with moonlight, but always there are color and fragrance and sound,--the song of a bird or the light tinkling of falling water.

One of the best qualities of Miss Lowell's work is a pictorial vividness which is due not only to the author's mastery of words, but to the power and originality of the figures. As an example of this last, I quote the following, from "The Middleton Place":

"Evenly, satirically, the mosses move to its
ineffable rhythm,

Like the ostrich fans of palsied dowagers

Telling one another contently of the deaths they
have lived to see."

We are apt to think of Miss Lowell as a lyrist only, but her best work is in the field of narration. Many of her later poems are well-told, readable stories, in which the interest is sustained with marked dramatic power. In a survey of all Miss Lowell's work, we must perceive that her salient quality is versatility. We have already noted the great variety in the types of her poems, which include practically every form, from the time-honored Petrarchan sonnet to the most modern pattern in vers libre or polyphonic prose. There is scarcely any stanza-arrangement or variety of meter which she has not used, as well as all the unconventional rhythms. Her subject-matter shows as wide a range of interest. She writes with equal

facility on subjects as dissimilar as the Boston Athaeneum and Thompson's Lunch Room, or the folk-lore of the American Indians and the history of the Bronze Horses of Venice. She levies tribute from every land and age. Her stage is crowded with characters as numerous and motley as in a bal masque, and as widely contrasted as a lonely New England farm woman and Lady Hamilton. Her backgrounds show as great a variety. Now we are in the rose bowers of Malmaison, at the height of Josephine's glory, and again we are walking beside tree-peonies in a Chinese garden, where a beetle "whose wings are of black lacquer spotted with milk has hid under the stone lotus that supports the statue of Buddha."

Another quality of Miss Lowell's literary personality is its virility. She displays a strange combination of masculine and feminine characteristics, expressing a man's strength and ruthlessness of passion, and a woman's delicacy and sensitiveness. Could any two poems be more dissimilar in tone than "Anticipation" and "A Gift?"

ANTICIPATION

I have been temperate always,
But I am like to be very drunk
With your coming.
There have been times
I feared to walk down the street
Lest I should reel with the wine of you,
And jerk against my neighbours
As they go by.

I am parched now, and my tongue is horrible in
my mouth,
And my brain is noisy
With the clash and gurgle of filling wine-cups."

A GIFT

"See! I give myself to you, Beloved!
My words are little jars
For you to take and put upon a shelf.
Their shapes are quaint and beautiful,
And they have many pleasant colours and lustres
To recommend them.
Also the scent from them fills the room
With sweetness of flowers and crushed grasses.

When I shall have given you the last one,
You will have the whole of me,
But I shall be dead."

Moreover, she makes effective use of both satire and irony, which last Untermeyer considers her most individual gift. Often she strikes a note suggestive of Oscar Wilde's idea that life holds but two tragedies,--not getting what you want and getting it. "Astigmatism", a poem dedicated to Ezra Pound," with much friendship and admiration and some differences of opinion," is a good example of gentle but penetrating irony. Notwithstanding its dedication, the poem is a very frank criticism of Pound's poetic principles. It shows us a poet whose vision is so dimmed by the dazzling glory of an ideal beauty, that he is quite unable

to see the simple beauty that is all about him. With blinded eyes, he destroys the real and never attains the ideal.

"The Poet came to a garden.

Dahlias ripened against a wall,

Gillyflowers stood up bravely for all their short
stature,

And a trumpet-vine covered an arbour

With the red and gold of its blossoms.

Red and gold like the brass notes of trumpets.

The Poet knocked off the stiff heads of the dahlias,

And his cane lopped the gillyflowers at the ground.

Then he severed the trumpet-blossoms from their stems.

Red and gold they lay scattered,

Red and gold, prone and dying.

"They were not roses," said the Poet.

Peace be with you, Brother.

But behind you is destruction, and waste places."

Although there is little humor in Miss Lowell's work, there is occasionally, as in "Fireworks," barbed wit in an oddly cynical thought.

"You hate me and I hate you

And we are so polite, we two!

But whenever I see you, I burst apart

And scatter the sky with my blazing heart.--

And when you meet me, you rend asunder
And go up in a flaming wonder!---
Such fireworks as we make, we two!
Because you hate me and I hate you."

The biographical element in Miss Lowell's work is strangely lacking; in fact, a subjective poem is rare. Now and then, as in the passage quoted below, she refers to her death, thus voicing a thought which has run through English poetry since Anglo-Saxon times.

"Sitting here in the Summer night,
I think of my death.
What will it be like for you then?
You will see my chair
With its bright chintz covering
Standing in the afternoon sunshine,
As now.
You will see my narrow table
At which I have written so many hours.
My dogs will push their noses into your hand,
And ask-ask-
Clinging to you with puzzled eyes.

The old house will still be here,
The old house which has known me since the beginning.
The walls which have watched me while I played:
Soldiers, marbles, paper-dolls,
Which have protected me and my books.

You will sit here, some quiet night,
Listening to the puffing trains,
But you will not be lonely,
For these things are a part of me.
And my love will go on speaking to you
Through the chairs, and the tables, and the pictures,
As it does now through my voice,
And the quick, necessary touch of my hand."

But with the exception of incidental touches here and there, Miss Lowell never intrudes her personality into her poetry. Her work is almost entirely objective, a record of her reaction to the material, sensuous beauty of the world.

Miss Lowell's poetic gift was of slow development. From 1902, when, like Wordsworth, she became a "dedicated spirit", to 1912, when her first volume appeared, were years of preparation and study.

"A Dome of Many Colored Glass" owes its title to Shelley's "Adonais".

"Life like a dome of many colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity." It is a collection of lyrics, conventional in tone, and, with one exception, in traditional meters. On the whole the book is exceedingly commonplace, and the critics "damned it with faint praise." It nevertheless contains a few poems which foreshadowed her later work. A certain quality of the verse, as well as the dedication of two of the poems to Keats, suggests thus early her admiration for the young "apostle of beauty." Here

and there, we find passages which are genuinely lyrical, and a few of the sonnets are good. One of the best is "Market Day," a picture full of color, glitter, fragrance, and music,--all those sense impressions which became so characteristic a part of her verse.

MARKET DAY

"White, glittering sunlight fills the market square,
Spotted and sprigged with shadows. Double rows
Of bartering booths spread out their tempting shows
Of globed and golden fruit, the morning air
Smells sweet with ripeness, on the pavement there
A wicker basket gapes and overflows
Spilling out cool, blue plums. The market glows,
And flaunts, and clatters in its busy care.
A stately minster at the northern side
Lifts its twin spires to the distant sky,
Pinnacled, carved and buttressed; through the wide
Arched doorway peals an organ, suddenly -
Crashing, triumphant in its pregnant tide,
Quenching the square in vibrant harmony."

In the fall of 1914, she published her second volume, "Sword Blades and Poppy Seed." An explanation of the title is contained in the first poem:

"All books are either dreams or swords
You can cut or you can drug with words."

The title really epitomizes the two aspects of Miss Lowell's talent. The "Sword" may symbolize her critical writings, in which she valiantly hacks and hews to destroy old conventions and to defend her new theories; the "Poppy Seed", her creative work in which she strives to realize a vision or a dream. This second book is in every way a great advance over the first; it shows a riper talent and an astonishing growth in power and maturity of expression. Indeed, so different is it from "The Dome of Many Colored Glass," that it reveals to us an entirely new author, the Amy Lowell of "modern" poetry. Many of the poems are in vers libre, the nature of which is carefully and clearly explained in the preface. There are also three experiments in an entirely new form, polyphonic prose, for which she acknowledges her indebtedness to Mr. Paul Fort, whom she styles its inventor. The most interesting of these is "The Forsaken", a prayer to Mary, which has a poignant intensity that produces a deep and lasting impression on the reader. This volume marks also the beginning of Miss Lowell's work as a story teller, for it contains several rhymed narratives, "The Great Adventure of Max Breuck," "After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok", and "The Book of Hours of Sister Clotilde." Although by no means equal to her later work in this line, they are indicative of her gift for narration which she afterwards developed so successfully. All the qualities associated with the name of Amy Lowell mark the verse of this volume, which in its originality seems an antithesis to the conventionality and triteness of its predecessor. As witness of the entirely new character of the poetry of "Sword

Blades and Poppy Seed", I quote "White and Green."

WHITE AND GREEN

"Hey! My daffodil-crowned,
Slim and without sandals!
As the sudden spurt of flame upon darkness
So my eyeballs are startled with you,
Supple-limbed youth among the fruit-trees,
Light runner through tasselled orchards,
You are an almond flower unsheathed
Leaping and flickering between the budded branches."

The years immediately following the publication of "Sword Blades and Poppy Seed," were those in which Miss Lowell devoted herself to the cause of Imagism and the editing of the Imagist Anthologies. But notwithstanding all the energy spent in this direction, she brought out in 1916 a third volume of poetry, "Men, Women, and Ghosts." It won for her instant recognition as one of the leading poets of the present generation, and it is still named by some critics as her finest work. Certainly the opening poem, "Patterns," of which we have already made mention, is her most widely known achievement in verse. Again we have an interesting preface, in which she discusses her theories and experiments, especially in their application to the poems in this volume. As Miss Lowell explains, "Men, Women, and Ghosts," consists entirely of story poems, the term being used in a meaning broad enough to include poems suggesting stories. At least it contains no verse of a purely lyrical character. The story-

CHAPTER 10

THEORY OF THE EARTH
AND ITS HISTORY

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telling reaches a very high grade of excellence, and there is a wide range in subject matter and form, with many interesting experiments. The first group of poems is entitled, "Figurines in Old Saxe." It contains besides "Patterns", another tragedy enacted in an eighteenth-century garden, "Pickthorn Manor," an interesting study in psychology. "The Cremona Violin" is one of this group, and so also is "A Roxbury Garden," which attempts to reproduce in the rhythms the circular motion of a hoop and the up-and-down elliptical movement of a shuttlecock. "The Cross Roads" (picturing the burial of a suicide with a stake through his heart) is a poem full of weird and ghostly suggestions. "1777", the last of the series, contrasts the death of Venice and the birth of the United States.

Entirely different from "Figurines", but quite as unusual, is "The Overgrown Pasture," which consists of four poems in dialect,--grim, everyday New England tragedies, a little suggestive of Frost.

Another innovation of this tireless experimenter is seen in "Spring Day" and "Towns in Color," in which she endeavors to give the color, light, and shade of certain places and hours, stressing the purely pictorial effect. As an example of this, I quote from "Spring Day," where the attempt is more successful than in "Towns in Color."

BATH

"The day is fresh-washed and fair, and there is a smell of tulips and narcissus in the air. The sunshine pours in at the bath-room window and bores through the water in the bath-tub in lathes and planes of greenish-white.

It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel, and cracks it to bright light. Little spots of sunshine lie on the surface of the water and dance, dance, and their reflections wobble deliciously over the ceiling; a stir of my finger sets them whirring, reeling. I move a foot, and the planes of light in the water jar. I lie back and laugh, and let the green-white water, the sun-flawed beryl water, flow over me. The day is almost too bright to bear, the green water covers me from the too bright day. I will lie here awhile and play with the water and the sun spots. The sky is blue and high. A crow flaps by the window, and there is a whiff of tulips and narcissus in the air."

The most remarkable work in the volume is "Bronze Tablets", which presents the entire Napoleonic drama in four pictures. We feel the tragedy of vaulting ambition humbled to the dust, but the author has fallen under the spell of Napoleon and the tone is one of hero worship. "The Fruit Shop" establishes the background of the series, with le General Bonaparte departing for the war. "Malmaison" offers a succession of pictures, wonderfully imagined and executed, of the home of Josephine, first in the days of its glory, and then in its time of decay.

"The slate roof sparkles in the sun, but it sparkles milkily, vaguely, the great glass-houses put out its shining. Glass, stone, and onyx now for the sun's mirror. Much has come to pass at Malmaison. New

rocks and fountains, blocks of carved marble, fluted pillars, uprearing antique temples, vases and urns in unexpected places, bridges of stone, bridges of wood, arbours and statues, and a flood of flowers everywhere, new flowers, rare flowers, parterre after parterre of flowers. Indeed, the roses bloom at Malmaison. It is youth, youth, untrammelled and advancing, trundling a country of it as though it were a hoop. Laughter, and spur janglings in tessellated vestibules. Tripping of clocked and embroidered stockings in little low-heeled shoes over smooth grass-plots. India muslins spangled with silver patterns slide through trees,--mingle--separate--white day fireflies flashing moon-brilliance in the shade of foliage.

Over the slate roof tall clouds, like ships of the line, pass along the sky. The glass-houses glitter splotchily, for many of their lights are broken. Roses bloom, fiery cinders quenching under damp weeds. Wreckage and misery, and a trailing of petty deeds smearing over old recollections. The musty rooms are empty and their shutters are closed, only in the gallery there is a stuffed black swan covered with dust. When you touch it, the feathers come off and float softly to the ground. Through a chink in the shutters, one can see the stately clouds crossing the sky toward the Roman arches of the Marly Aqueduct."

"The Hammers", the finest of the series, symbolizes with the sound of hammers the rise and fall of the Emperor. It closes with a wonderful picture of Napoleon in the days of disaster, defeat, and eclipse.

"Tap! Tap! Tap!

Marble likeness of an Emperor,

Dead man, who burst your heart against a world
too narrow.

The hammers drum you to your last throne

Which always you shall hold alone.

Tap! Tap!

The glory of your past is faded as a sunset fire,
Your day lingers only like the tones of a wind-lyre
In a twilit room.

Here is the emptiness of your dream
Scattered about you.

Tap! Tap!

Strange World! Strange Wayfarer!

Strange Destiny!

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Miss Lowell's life may be described as a succession of absorbing interests, and at this time all her attention was turned to developing the possibilities of polyphonic prose, which she felt had not been sufficiently plumbed. In 1918, "Can Grande's Castle," a volume almost entirely in polyphonic prose, appeared. In the preface, Miss Lowell analyzes most

carefully the structure and characterists of the form, and presents her matured theories as to its use.

"Can Grande's Castle" is pre-eminently a war-time volume,- not because the poems are war poems,-but because it was inspired by the stern and terrible realties of the Great War which turned her vision backward on the "old, unhappy, far-off, things and battles long ago." For the first time these became actualities to her, and she attempted to make them real to her readers. There is nothing original about the book; all the material has come from her reading,-even the title, which is taken from one of Richard Addington's poems, "At the British Museum." The following lines from this poem are quoted on the title-page as the motto of this book.

"I turn the page and read...

.....

The heavy musty air, the black desks,
The bent heads and the rustling noises
In the great dome
Vanish...

And

The sun hangs in the cobalt-blue sky,
The boat drifts over the lake shallows,
The fishes skim like umber shades through the
undulating weeds,

The oleanders drop their rosy petals on the lawns,
And the swallows dive and swirl and whistle

ABOUT THE CLEFT BATTLEMENTS OF CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE."

The book consists of four long narrative poems which give the effect of a great historical panorama. "Sea Blue and Blood Red," is a most colorful presentation of the romance between Lord Nelson and Emma Hamilton. "Guns As Keys: And The Great Gate Swings," a very effective combination of polyphonic prose and vers libre, describes the opening of Japan by Commodore Perry. "Hedge Island," a much slighter work than the others, re-creates the coaching period in England. "Bronze Horses", the last of the series, and, I think, the finest, pictures in many vivid episodes, the whole eventful history of the Horses of St. Mark's from the days of Titus when they looked down upon Rome from the Arch of Nero until, after the lapse of centuries, they were sent from Venice to Rome for safekeeping, to protect them from damage by air-raids during the World War. The "merry-go-round of time" had completed its circle, and the bronze horses have returned once more to the Eternal City. To illustrate the unique excellences of the poem, I quote the memorable ending:

"The boat draws away from the Riva. The great bronze horses mingle their outlines with the distant mountains. Dim gold, subdued green-gold, flashing faintly to the faint, bright peaks above them. Granite and metal, earth over water. Down the canal, old, beautiful horses, pride of Venice, of Constantinople, of Rome. Wars bite you with their little flames and pass away, but roses and oleanders strew their petals before your going, and you move like a constellation in a space of crimson stars. So the horses float

along the canal between barred and shuttered palaces,
splendid against marble walls in the fire of the sun."

In 1919, Miss Lowell returned to the lyric vein, and published "Pictures of the Floating World," which includes no narrative poetry. It contains, however, the finest examples of her lyric work, such as "Ombre Chinoise," "The Garden by Moonlight," "Venus Transiens," "Mise en Scene," and "Opal." Nevertheless, it is not so conspicuously successful as the narrative volumes, for although Miss Lowell has an authentic lyric gift, her elaboration of technique and her effort for ornate effects are incompatible with the natural spontaneity which marks the purest lyric expression. This deficiency to be felt even in such lovely verse as "The Madonna of The Evening Flowers:"

"I see you,
Standing under a spire of pale blue larkspur,
With a basket of roses on your arm.
You are cool, like silver,
And you smile.
I think the Canterbury bells are playing
little tunes.

You tell me that the peonies need spraying,
That the columbines have overrun all bounds,
That the pyrus japonica should be cut back and
rounded.

You tell me these things.
But I look at you, heart of silver,

Burning beneath the blue steeples of the larkspur,
And I long to kneel instantly at your feet,
While all about us peal the loud, sweet Te Deums
of the Canterbury bells."

The first section of "Pictures of the Floating World," is devoted to a new and interesting experiment. "Lacquer Prints" are poems written in imitation of Chinese and Japanese verse, and they attempt to reproduce the charm of Oriental poetry. They are not, on the whole, particularly effective, but are finely wrought, with a delicate and fragile beauty.

NUANCE

"Even the iris bends
When a butterfly lights upon it,"

AUTUMN

"All day I have watched the purple vine leaves
Fall into the water.
And now in the moonlight they still fall,
But each leaf is fringed with silver."

Although these "Lacquer Prints" are not translations but Miss Lowell's own conceptions, they reveal her interest in the poetic art of the Orient, an interest which found fuller expression two years later in "Fir Flower Tablets." This is another adventure,- an attempt to render in English verse the work of some of the old Chinese poets, notably Li T'ai Po (A.D.701-762) and Tu Fu (A.D. 712-770). This experiment is the more remark-

able in that Miss Lowell herself did not know the Chinese language. The translations were made by Florence Ayscough, who also analyzed for Miss Lowell the thought and mood of the poems, and carefully explained to her the technical characteristics of Chinese verse. In making the English versions, Miss Lowell kept strictly to the rules of Chinese versification in regard to rhyme and meter, and tried always to retain the spirit of the originals. Chinese scholars have said that Miss Lowell has been most successful in this attempt, and certainly the poems have a subtle Oriental tone; yet one feels in them much of Miss Lowell's own spirit, as though a kinship existed between these ancient verse makers of the East and our "new" poets of today. "Picking Willow" by Li T'ai Po may serve to illustrate the "Fir Flower Tablets."

PICKING WILLOW

"The drooping willow brushes the very clear water,
Beautifully it flickers in this East-wind time
of the year.

Its flowers are bright as the snow of the Jade Pass,
Its leaves soft as smoke against the gold window.
She, the Lovely One, bound in her long thoughts;
Facing them, her heart is burnt with grief.
Pull down a branch,
Gather the Spring colour
And send it far,
Even to that place
Before the Dragon Gate."

Miss Lowell's remarkable vigor and industry are proved by the rapid sequence of her books. In 1921, the same year in which "Fir Flower Tablets" appeared, she published another volume of original verse, "Legends," which again takes us into the realm of narration. "A legend," she tells us in the preface, "is something which nobody has written and everybody has written, and which anybody is at liberty to rewrite." In this volume she has rewritten for us eleven interesting old tales, gathered from the four corners of the earth. Three are Indian legends from Peru and our own West; "The Witch Woman" represents the folk lore of Yucatan; "A Legend of Porcelain" is Chinese; "Before the Storm" and "Four Sides to a House" are New England tales; and the rest are of European origin. They are excellent chiefly as well-told stories rather than as artistic creations. The first, however, "Memorandum Confided by a Yucca to a Passion Vine" is a splendid conception of the Incas of Peru; it was suggested to Miss Lowell by a sentence in Garcilasso de la Vega's account of his ancestors, the Incas. The setting is full of color and bright with the glitter of metal, a re-creation of the ancient Peru of our imagination. In this poem is the unforgettable description of the moonrise, and its light on the dance of the dead mothers of the Inca race.

" It is she---the MOON!

White mist circumvolves about her,

On her head is a diadem of opal-changing ice,

And hoar-frost follows the stepping of her feet.

A single emerald, half white, half foaming green,

Clasps a girdle about her waist.
Terribly she dances in the ring of Inca mothers.
The garden turns with them as they move,
Winding and closing about them,
Impelling them toward the Temple,
Up to the Altar.
Trumpets, brazen and vainglorious,
Silver-striking, shouting cymbals,
Open horns, round gourd-drums beaten to a rattle
of flame.
Movement, ghostly, perpetual,
And sound, loud, sweet, sucking from the four
edges of the sky.
Everything swings, and sings, and oscillates
and curves.
Only the moon upon the High Altar is still.
She stands, struck to immobility,
Then, without haste, unclasps the foaming emerald
And the mists part and fall....
Silence--
Silence spread beneath her as a footstool.
The flowers close;
The Inca mothers are dead corpses on their silver
thrones.
But She!
Naked, white, and beautiful,
Poised and infinite;

Flesh,
Spirit,
Woman and Unparalleled Enchantment.
Moon of waters,
Womb of peoples,
Majesty and highest Queen."

"Many Swans" is a version of the Sun Myth of the North American Indian. As illustrative of the vividness and force with which Miss Lowell retells these fascinating old legends, I quote the description of the Pueblo Indians hunting snakes for their snake dance.

"Twixt this side, twixt that side,
Twixt rock-stones and sage-brush,
Twixt bushes and sand,
Go the snakes a smooth way,
Belly-creeping
Sliding faster than the flash of water on a blue-
bird's wing.

Twixt corn and twixt cactus,
Twixt springside and barren,
Along a cold trail
Slip the snake-people.
Black-tip-tongued Garter Snakes,
Olive-blue Racer Snakes,
Whip Snakes and Rat Snakes.
Great orange Bull Snakes,

And the King of the Snakes,
With his high rings of scarlet,
His high rings of yellow,
His double high black rings,
Detesting his fellows,
The Killer of Rattlers.
Rattle-rattle-rattle-
Rattle-rattle-rattle-
The Rattlers,
The Rattlesnakes.
Hiss-s-s-s!
Ah-h-h!
White Rattlesnakes,
Green Rattlesnakes.
Black-and-yellow Rattlesnakes,
Barred like tigers
Soft as panthers.
Diamond Rattlesnakes
All spotted,
Six feet long
With tails of snow-shine.
And most awful,
Heaving wrongwise,
The fiend-whisking
Swift Sidewinders.
Rattlesnakes upon the desert
Coiling in a clump of greasewood,

Winding up the Mesa footpath.

Who dares meet them?

Who dares stroke them?

Who dares seize them?

Rattle-rattle-rattle-

Rattle-rattle-hiss-s-s!"

"A Legend of Porcelain" is another illustration of Miss Lowell's interest in things Chinese. It is really a combination of several legends, and the material was gathered from many sources, one being the "Historie et Fabrication de le Porcelaine Chinoise," by M. Stanislas Julien, a book from which Lafcadio Hearn also drew material for his "Tale of the Porcelain God." "A Legend of Porcelain" is a riot of color, a veritable pageant of old China. The spirit of China is wonderfully epitomized in the opening lines:

"Old China sits and broods behind her ten-thousand-miles-
great wall,

And the rivers of old China crawl-crawl-forever
Toward the distant ceaselessly waiting seas."

The vivid and delicate beauty of the poem is illustrated by the following passage describing Kuan-Yin, the Goddess of Mercy:

"All the flowers bend toward her.

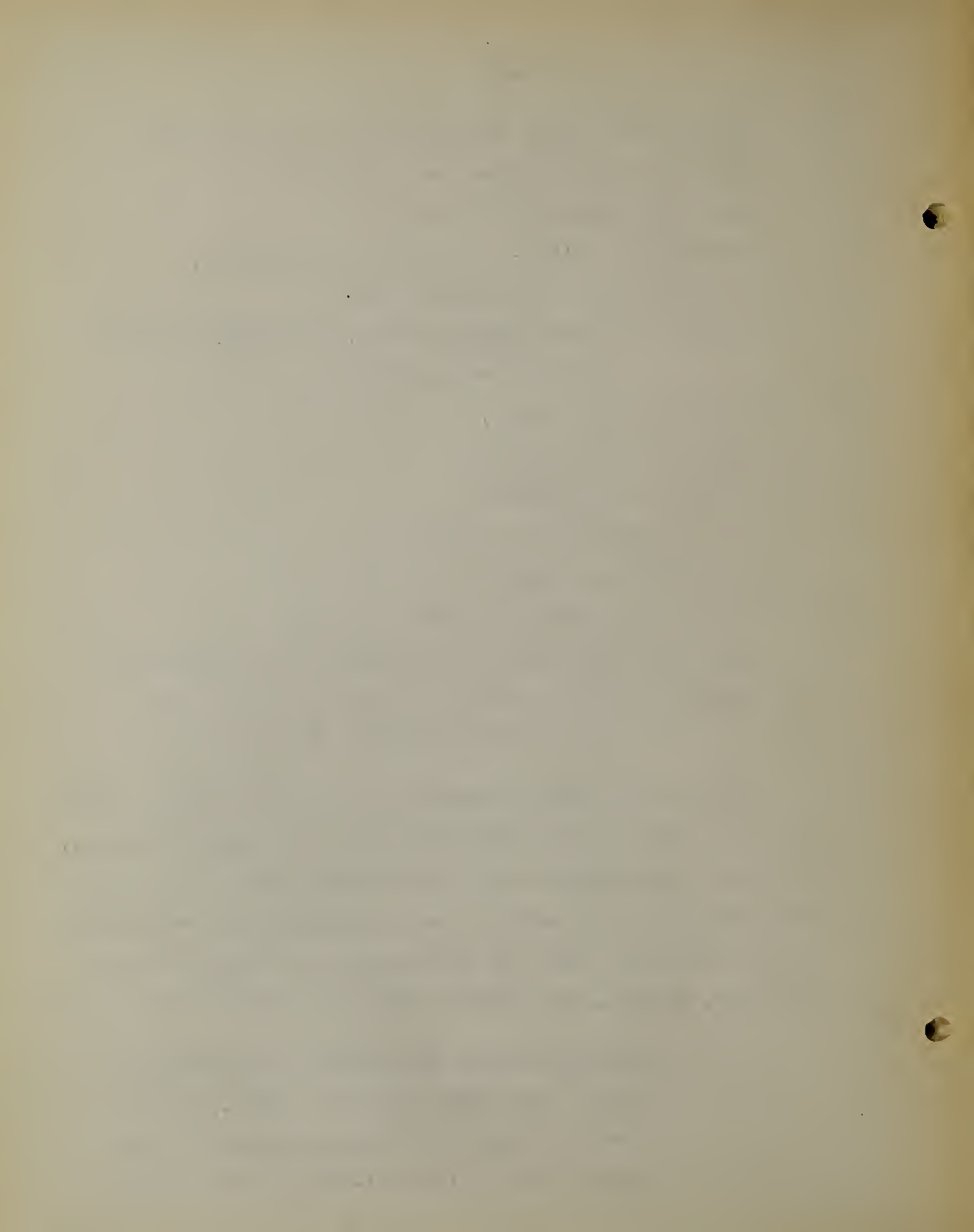
The grass by the ring-fence lies horizontally to
reach her,

She moves with the movement of wind over water,

And it is no longer the moon which casts her shadow
But she who sets shadows curving outward
From the pebbles at her feet.
Her dress is Ch'ing-green playing into scarlet,
Embroidered with the hundred shous;
The hem is a slow delight of gold, the faded, beautiful
gold of temple carvings;
In her hair is a lotus,
Red as the sun after rain.
She comes softly-softly-
And the tinkle of her ornaments
Jars the smooth falling of the snow
So that it breaks into jagged lightnings
Which form about her the characters of her holy name:
Kuan-Yin, Goddess of Mercy, of Sailors, of all who
know sorrow and grieve in bitterness."

The two New England legends are not at all familiar. "Four Sides to a House" is an uncanny tale of murder and retribution, based on a superstition that a ghost cannot enter a door above which the skull of a horse has been fastened with a silver nail. "Before the Storm" tells of an old man who ever rides before the storm, seeking, but always in vain, the road to Boston.

"Always the chaise flees before the approaching storm. And always, down the breeze, blowing backwards through the bending trees, comes the despairing wail--'Boston!--For the love of God,



put me on the road to Boston! Then the
gale grows louder, lightning spurts and
dazzles, and steel-white rain falls
heavily out of the sky. A great clap
of thunder, and purple-black darkness
blinding the earth."

One critic finds humor in the thought that it should be Boston which the rider is trying so hard to reach.

"Legends" was the last volume of poetry which Miss Lowell published, the following years being devoted to the Biography of Keats. Individual poems, however, appeared in the magazines during this period, and these, with a number of hitherto unpublished poems, have been collected in a posthumous volume, "What's O'Clock." This book, like all the others, is representative of a wide range of interests, but it introduces no new phase. Some of the poems, "Purple Grackles," for example, have already found their way into anthologies, and "Lilacs" has become generally familiar. Certainly it will always find response in the hearts of those who know the Arboretum in lilac time.

A poem in which I have a personal interest is "Meeting-House Hill." I taught for several years in the school on "Meeting-House Hill", and the windows of my class-room looked out upon the white church with its beautiful spire, and the blue bay beyond the railroad track. I bear testimony that often when I was "mad or very tired," I went to the window and found peace in the beauty which Miss Lowell pictures. This poem I can judge truly, and "it is good."

MEETING-HOUSE HILL.

"I must be mad, or very tired,
When the curve of a blue bay beyond a railroad track
Is shrill and sweet to me like the sudden springing
of a tune,
And the sight of a white church above thin trees in
a city square
Amazes my eyes as though it were the Parthenon.
Clear, reticent, superbly final,
With the pillars of its portico refined to cautious
elegance,
It dominates the weak trees,
And the shot of its spire
Is cool, and candid,
Rising into an unresisting sky.
Strange meeting-house
Pausing a moment upon a squalid hill-top.
I watch the spire sweeping the sky,
I am dizzy with the movement of the sky,
I might be watching a mast
With its royals set full
Straining before a two-reef breeze.
I might be sighting a tea-clipper,
Tacking into the blue bay,
Just back from Canton
With her hold full of green and blue porcelain,
And a Chinese coolie leaning over the rail

Gazing at the white spire
With dull, sea-spent eyes."

With this last volume of verse we may briefly review the strength and weakness of Miss Lowell's poetry. The outstanding quality of her poetry is, as we have seen, its sensuous appeal. She possessed a keen feeling for beauty in any form, with an especial appreciation of anything exotic. Her imaginative power and her gift of words made it possible for her to express this beauty in vivid images that reveal the often unsuspected or unnoticed loveliness of familiar things. Another salient characteristic is her ability to tell a story with dramatic intensity and vivid pictorial effect. Frequently and successfully she makes use of irony. In the field of technique she has made a very real contribution through her experiments in rhythm and versification.

"I ride, I ride,

Seeking those adventures to which I am dedicate." These lines, taken from one of her later poems, might well have been her motto. Her zest for experiment and her perhaps too great versatility may, however, be regarded as faults rather than virtues. She dissipated her energies in too many lines of endeavor, and her books were produced too rapidly for consistent excellence.

The greatest defect in her poetry is an almost total lack of thought content and moral and spiritual appeal. The dramatic impulse is always of action rather than of thought, and the character study is superficial, revealing little real penetra-

tion. She seems to have been without any religious faith, or belief in a future life. Her attitude toward creeds was bitterly cynical, as is evidenced by these stanzas quoted from "Evelyn Ray."

"What if all religions be true,
And Gabriel's trumpet blow for you
And blow for them--what will you do?

Better be nothing, Evelyn Ray,
A handful of buttercups that sway
In the wind for a children's holiday.

For earth to earth is the best we know,
Where the good blind worms push to and fro
Turning us into the seeds which grow.

And lovers and ladies are dead indeed,
Lost in the sap of a flower seed.
Is this, think you, a sorry creed?

Well, be it so, for the world is wide
And opinions jostle on every side.
What has always hidden will always hide.

And every year when the fields are high
With oat grass, and red top, and timothy,
I know that a creed is the shell of a lie.

Undoubtedly, Miss Lowell's poetry suffers from the over-elaboration of her technique and her strained and forced imagery.

These faults exist because she was theorist as well as poet, a fact which we are never quite able to forget in reading her poetry.

Anyone making a close study of Miss Lowell's work must soon perceive that she surpassed all American poets in the intimacy and breadth of her knowledge of the technique of poetry. Her study embraced all contemporary English and American poetry, and the word "all" is used in its exact meaning, for she had a standing order at the booksellers for every new book of verse. She was equally intensive in the study of the historic aspects of English poetry; and recognizing the originality and excellence of French poetry, she made herself thoroughly conversant with that also. In the prefaces to her volumes of poetry, she explains and defends her developing theories concerning verse forms.

Her interest in French poetry and her feeling of indebtedness to the French masters are expressed in a volume of criticism, "Six French Poets," which was published in 1915. She says in the preface, "In the spring of 1914, I was invited to deliver a series of lectures on modern French poetry in Boston during the following winter. This book consists of these lectures rewritten and arranged for the press."

The volume thus simply accounted for is a collection of critical biographies, enriched with a generous selection of poems,- whole poems,-not fragments,--from the writers considered. For the further pleasure and instruction of the American reader, Miss Lowell supplies excellent original translations of all these

poems. She says, "The translations are in prose. Verse translations must always depart somewhat from the originals, on account of the exigencies of rhyme and meter. As my desire was not to make English poems about a French original, but to make the French poems a text understandable, I have sacrificed the form to the content. The translations are exact, and in every case reproduce, as far as is possible in another language, the 'perfume' of the poem. By reading them, and turning to the original and reading it aloud in French, those least versed in the tongue will get an idea of the music of the poem, while at the same time understanding it."

So exact and delicate is Miss Lowell's feeling for the value of words and the music of the rhythms that one feels that the translations thus modestly offered contain some of the best examples of her work. Consider, for example, this translation of Albert Samain's sonnet, "Ville Morte."

A DEAD CITY

Vague, lost in the depths of monotonous sands, the city of other days, without towers or ramparts, sleeps the last sleep of old Babylons, under the white winding-sheet of her sparse marbles.

Formerly she reigned; upon her strong walls Victory extended her two iron wings. All the people of Asia besieged her hundred gates; and her great stairways descended toward the sea...

Empty now and forever silent, stone by stone, she dies,
under the moon, close to her old river, exhausted like herself.

And, alone, in the midst of disaster, an elephant of bronze,
still upright upon the summit of a broken doorway, tragically
lifts its trunk to the stars.

Reading this and comparing it with Miss Lowell's other work,
one receives no impression of its transfer from one language to
another. All the translations are arrestingly beautiful. They,
of themselves, make the book valuable. But it offers much more.

In this volume Miss Lowell considers the lives and work of
six modern French poets, -Emile Verhaeren, Albert Samain, Remy de
Gourmont, Henri de Regnier, Francis Jammes, and Paul Fort. She
studies the life of each poet in the light of its probable effect
upon his work. Projecting her imagination upon each scene that
she creates, she makes the reader see how the poet's experiences
have been distilled in the fine essence of his poetry. As an
example of this subtle study, consider this passage on Verhaeren:

"As the boy Constable is said to have grown familiar
with clouds, and to have acquired a love for them,
in tending his father's windmill, so the boy
Verhaeren must have got his knowledge of weather and
skies while wandering along the level, paved roads
of East Flanders, buffeted by the wind and washed
by the sun, or while lying in bed listening to the
rain splash on tiled roofs, and patter against the

shutters. His poems are full of weather. They are almost a 'line-a-day' book of temperatures and atmospheres."

The following extract shows how she makes strong childhood impressions account for Francis Jammes' preoccupation with scenes of exotic beauty.

"But Bordeaux was another story. It was full of endless interests for a growing boy--the quays, with their big ships perpetually loading and unloading, and that spicy smell which haunts vessels trading with the Indies or the Orient; the ship-chandler's shops with their suggestion of deep waters; and the innumerable bird-seller's shops, full of parrots and other gay-plumaged, tropical birds, fit to rouse the imagination of the stolidest youngster that ever was born. And Jammes was anything but a stolid youngster. He was avid of impressions, and untiring in the intelligence he brought to bear upon them.

The big ships forever sailing away, and returning laden with strange fruits and tropical merchandise, filled the boy with a sort of nostalgia for those distant, sun-basking ports."

It is passages like this, accounting for the poet's work in terms of his experience, which make these essays so extremely interesting and readable, even to one who is not particularly

concerned with questions of technique. Miss Lowell does not ignore the technical aspect of the poems, but discusses each poet's individual excellencies, with especial emphasis upon his experiments in meter.

All in all, "Six French Poets" is a delightful book, sympathetic, broad, penetrating, and informing. It rewards the reader with an increased knowledge of modern French poetry, as well as a deepened appreciation of the infinite magic of words. Miss Lowell possessed in a wonderful degree the gift of imparting her enthusiasms to others.

Miss Lowell's next critical volume was the collection of essays entitled, "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry," which was published in 1917. Her study of the so-called modern movement in poetry is historical and philosophical. She carefully surveys the changing ideals and beliefs which have moulded American thought since colonial times, and gives to each of the poets under consideration his particular place as an exemplar of the transition from rigid Puritanism to modern scepticism. In her preface she clearly outlines the process of her study. "What sets the poets of today apart from those of the Victorian era is an entire difference of outlook. Ideas believed to be fundamental have disappeared and given place to others. And as poetry is the expression of the heart of man, so it reflects this change to the smallest particle.

"It has been my endeavor in these essays to follow this evolution, in the movement as a whole, and also in the work of the particular poets who compose it. I have tried to show

what has led each of these men to adopt the habit of mind which now characterizes him, why he has been forced out of one order into another; how his ideas have gradually taken form in his mind, and in what way he expresses this form in his work. I have pointed out his ancestry, physical as well as mental, and have noted where atavism has held him back, where pushed him forward."

This plan of work, searching and logical, cannot but result in clear-cut, intelligent criticism, informative and interesting to the reader. She offers studies of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, and the Imagists,--exemplified by "H. D." and John Gould Fletcher. Each of these poets she presents as the exemplar of a certain stage or trend in a great movement of transition, and she also shows how his work has been modified by his individual ancestry, environment and experience.

As Miss Lowell proceeds with her analysis of the modern tendencies of thought in America, even the reader who is familiar with her attitude of revolt against tradition is astonished at the strength and passion of her indictment of Puritanism, her own inheritance. She says, for example; "Of course the dwellers in large cities worked upon from their earliest childhood by modern conditions, were able to modify the Puritan sentiment, to cast out what of poison remained in it. For Puritanism at this late day has resolved itself into a virulent poison which saps vitality and brings on the convulsions of despair."

"Puritanism," she continues, "was always a drastic, soul-searching, joyless religion. It was itself a revolt against a license that had become unbearable. But no student of history can fail to be struck with the vigour and healthy-mindedness of a race which can live under such an incubus and retain its sanity. There is no more horrible page to the student than that of the early times in New England, when nervous little children were tortured with exhortations to declare their faith and escape the clutches of the devil, and senile old women were burned for witches. Moloch and sacrifices of human victims is no more revolting. Yet in spite of much infant mortality, and many of the weaker members of a community going insane, the people as a whole lived and thrived under this threatening horror, with the vitality of a race born to endure."

One may question the historical accuracy,-- and even the grammar,- of this passage, but it leaves the reader in no doubt as to Miss Lowell's repudiation of the Puritan tradition.

Conducted upon this basis of history and philosophy, Miss Lowell's analysis of the work of the individual poets is at once penetrating and sympathetic. As a poet, her ear is quick to catch subtle beauties in metre and delicate nuances in words; as a thinker she is keen to notice and comprehend the poet's philosophy and beliefs. The reader leaves each essay with an increased understanding of the thought-content of each poet, and a heightened admiration for beauties of form and content. Edwin Arlington Robinson, for example, she sees as an intellectual poet, melancholy, and calm, devoid of passion.

In a noteworthy passage she says: "Let us suppose a man, mellowed, resigned, but a little seared withal, a kindly monk fled from the world after a large experience, sitting in his monastery, telling tales of old events, not judging, not extenuating, disillusioned and calm because he has stamped so long upon the fires within him that now, for the most part, they burn quietly, obedient to control. He talks kindly, bringing up out of his past much that is interesting, some things that are terrifying. But he turns it all aside with a quiet smile. It is so long ago. There is really much to be said on the other side. It is over for him; these are only memories, you understand."

This is surely a sympathetic interpretation of the detached, remote attitude of much that Mr. Robinson has written. Her other expositions are equally fine. We feel the mysticism, love of nature and ingrained New Englandism of Robert Frost, the cynicism, irony, and brutal humor of Edgar Lee Masters, the strength and virility of Carl Sandburg, and the delicacy and originality of the Imagist group. We feel that Miss Lowell's admiration and enthusiasm are given in greatest measure to the Grecian perfection of "H. D.", essentially a "Poet's poet". She says: "To this poet, beauty is a thing so sharp as to be painful, delight so poignant it can scarcely be borne. Her extreme sensitiveness turns appreciation to exquisite suffering. Yet, again and again, she flings herself bravely upon the spears of her own reactions." In her essay on the Imagists, Miss Lowell gives a careful exposition of vers libre, or as she calls it, "cadenced verse," illustrating her explanation by passages

from "H. D." 's poems.

Of the purely biographical passages one of the most interesting tells of Robert Frost's sojourn in England and of the group of young poets who used to meet and exchange ideas until they were dispersed by the outbreak of the war. This same group of poets has recently been described in Wilfred Gibson's poem "The Golden Room," published in the Atlantic Monthly.

"Tendencies in Modern American Poetry" is, on the whole, a most satisfying book, explaining Miss Lowell herself, as well the poets she writes of. She might have entitled it, "Apologia Pro Vita Mea!"

In 1922, there appeared an interesting experiment, "A Critical Fable," which presented in the form of verse much the same material as was contained in "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry." This book, published anonymously, is an imitation of James Russell Lowell's "Fable for Critics," which so cleverly and wisely evaluated the American poets of an earlier age. It must be admitted that Miss Lowell's work is inferior to its prototype. It is not, on the whole, interesting or easy to read. The movement is slow, the thought often obscure, and many of the rhymes forced in a manner reminiscent of Browning. In her analysis of the work of the moderns, there are occasional lines of terse and pungent criticism, but the greatest interest lies in the survey of her own work. Protected, as she thought by the screen of anonymity, (a screen which proved to be transparent), she offered detached criticisms of her own writings, which she surveyed and studied as a significant phase of the

"modern" school. She found in her work much that was good, and predicted that with the lapse of time her fame would become "more rather than less."

The crowning work of Miss Lowell's literary life, her "magnum opus," is the biography of Keats. It is a monumental work, involving a vast amount of study and research. In 1921, on the one-hundredth anniversary of the death of Keats, Miss Lowell delivered at Yale a commemorative address. She had long been interested in Keats and had gathered a notable collection of letters, books, and manuscripts owned by him, or bearing on his life. In studying this collection, in preparation for the address, Miss Lowell discovered many letters hitherto unpublished and much new information, far more, she realized, than could be incorporated in an hour's talk. In her preface to the Life she says: "Realizing that, if my own collection could yield so much, the collections of others must also contain a great deal of which biographers and commentators were unaware, I decided that there was room for a new biography which should incorporate all the available material and make it accessible to students of Keats." So the new project was born. It was distinctly a labor of love, for Keats had long been her literary lode-star, and she now spared no pains to make her study of his life a thorough and scholarly achievement. The list of the libraries and collections which she explored is truly formidable. Besides investigating the large collections such as the Morgan collection in New York and the Dilke collection in Hampstead, England, she neglected no opportunity to examine any single manuscript, letter,

picture, or memento which she had heard of as the possession of an individual. She even corresponded with Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hardy to obtain information about the Keats family in Dorsetshire, and submitted Keat's health-history to eminent doctors, who supplied professional opinions on the progress and treatment of his disease. A grand-daughter of Keat's brother, George, gave information concerning the Keats family in America and compiled a genealogy of George Keats' descendants; the Reverend Prebendary Thicknesse made a copy of the entry of the marriage of Keats' parents in the Register Book of Marriages of St. George's Church, Hanover Square, London. These are only a few illustrations of her investigations, and are selected from many, to show the thoroughness of her preparation. After two years of unremitting labor, the book appeared in 1925,-- two stout volumes, about thirteen hundred pages in all.

Miss Lowell had now won so high a place in American letters that any new work of hers was certain to receive respectful attention at the hands of the critics. The book was highly praised in America. The Bookman, referring to the thoroughness of Miss Lowell's work, says: "Few of the critics who have lavished praise on Miss Lowell's fine biography of John Keats know the tremendous strength of will which went into its making. She brought all her New England courage to bear upon the problem, and by a system of rigorous discipline completed a work which entailed labors of research and actual writing that would have been remarkable in one enjoying perfect health---Of her 'John Keats' many things have been said, but the fact that it is a

handbook for the young writer may not have become apparent. No book on how to write poetry, or how to live the artistic life, can equal it. In the mistakes of Keats, Miss Lowell points out the duties of others."

In England, however, the biography was not received so favorably. Certain of the English critical reviews questioned the value of Miss Lowell's work, and even the authenticity of some of her material, hinting that wealthy American collectors are easily imposed upon by means of forged letters. Some American critics in replying to these reviews, said that English critics have a hereditary inability to accord respectful consideration to American scholarship. Witness a recent article by H. L. Mencken.

"The English reviewers are not only not amiable to American books, they are excessively savage with them. Not a few of them, indeed, appear to specialize in flogging the abominable Yankee. If they can find nothing else to say against an American book they protest bitterly against its American locutions and American spelling, as if the English standard in such things were the only conceivably correct one.

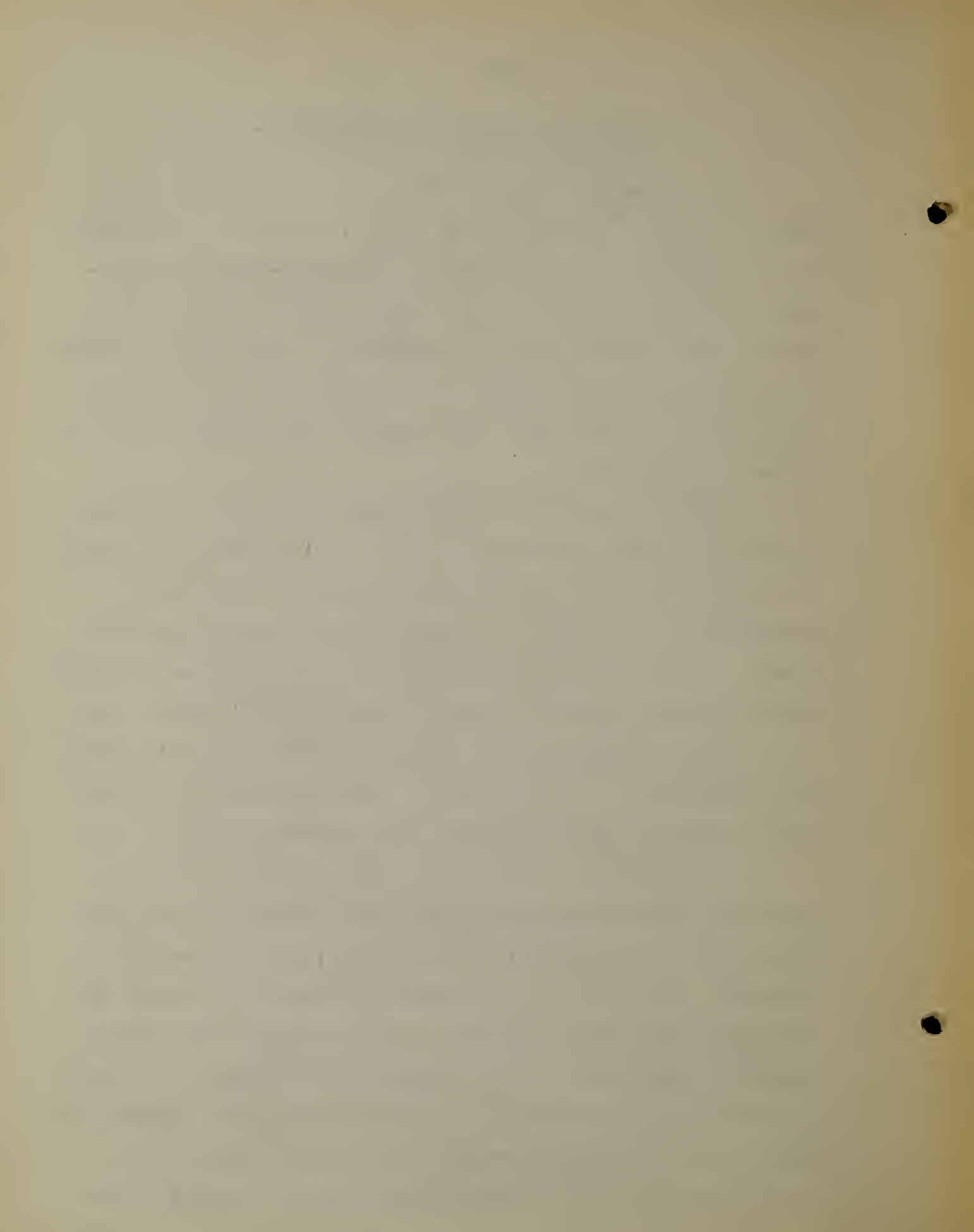
The case of Miss Amy Lowell's 'Keats' is too recent to need recalling--and too glaring. The book was denounced in England as if writing it had been a sort of crime. Every pedant in the land devoted himself to searching for trivial errors in it. It was sneered at as biography and belabored as criticism. The thing went to such lengths that many Englishmen got alarmed and rose to protest..... a book upon which she had spent the labor of years, and into which she had poured all her immense knowledge of Keats and all her skill as a critic of poetry... because it was American, was assaulted as ferociously

in England as if it had been downright illiterate."

Clement Shorter, editor of the London Sphere, who was a friend and ardent admirer of Amy Lowell, resents the unfairness of the English reviews, but denies that Anglo-American prejudice was the cause of it. He blames a petty literary clique headed by Sir Edmund Gosse. The members of this little circle, he says, feel it a sacrilege for an outsider to write a book on a subject on which their own Sidney Colvin has long been the recognized authority.

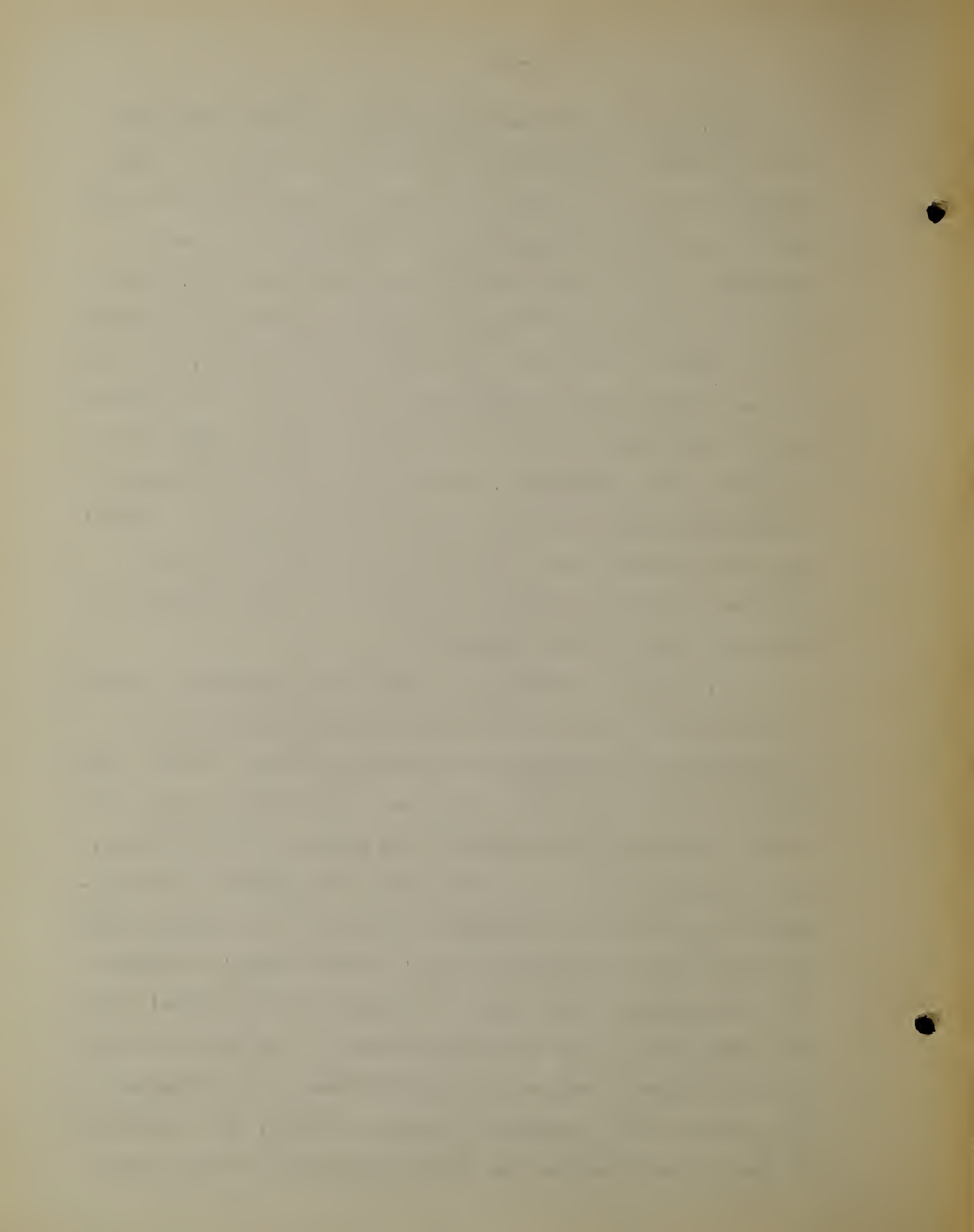
It has been said that disappointment and worry over these unfavorable reviews undermined Miss Lowell's health and hastened her death. Those who knew her best, however, say that her reasonableness and sense of proportion would prevent any such result. Miss Lowell in the biography had stressed particularly the cruelty and injustice of the reviews of Keats's poems, and had burned with sympathy and indignation over the poet's consequent sufferings. It is a curious happening that she should herself suffer similar treatment from English reviews.

The outstanding quality of the Life of Keats is its sympathy, a most remarkable oneness with the poet in his life, his ideals, his struggles, his sufferings, his defeats, his triumphs. Miss Lowell has bridged the chasm of a century and fused her personality with that of Keats, so that the reader receives an impression of her complete identification with him. In her Preface she explains her method of approach: "Keats and his poetry are so much of a piece, that I have followed a rather unusual method in dealing with the two aspects of his



character, the personal and the poetic. I have given his life as a whole, bringing in the poems at intervals as they occurred to him. My object has been to make the reader feel as though he were living with Keats, subject to the same influences that surrounded him, moving in his circle, watching the advent of poems as from day to day they sprang into being. I have tried to bring back into existence the place, the time, and the society in which Keats moved.....For this reason, I have considered that no detail which could add vividness to the picture is unimportant, nothing which could clarify his psychological processess too slight to be mentioned. Keats' life was so short that it is possible to follow it with a minuteness which could not be accorded to a poet who had lived the usual span of man's existence."

This plan is carefully and successfully followed. We see a living Keats, in an actual environment, carefully reconstructed from every scrap of available evidence. Miss Lowell shows us the London, the England, of Keats' time. She tells of his family, his surroundings, his education, his friends, his trials, his work and recreations. We watch the development of his mind and the gradual unfolding of his poetic gift. Never was a more loving biography! Miss Lowell's sympathy and understanding never fail. She seems to feel Keats' needs and aspirations as if they were her own. She makes us understand his early trials,- his father's death, the unkindness of his guardian, his uncongenial medical studies, his lonesomeness in his London lodgings, the illness and death of his brother



Tom, and George's departure for America.

Her sympathetic understanding of the young poet's needs is well illustrated by this passage; (I--244)--"It is a pathetic thing that Keats never found just the woman he needed to act as mother, confidant, playmate, and wise and sympathetic counsellor, - a woman fitted to see him through his difficulties and enthusiasms with unwearying sympathy, and hand him over to the inevitable girl who was sure to come, when the time arrived." One cannot avoid the whimsical thought that Miss Lowell herself was just that woman, rich in all that Keats needed, and a hundred years too late!

We find, moreover, that Miss Lowell's sympathetic attitude is not incompatible with clear-sighted discerning criticism. The development of Keats' poetic gift is clearly shown, from the crudity of his earliest efforts to the glorious perfection of his crowning achievements. Every line is carefully considered and any prophetic gleams in early mediocre poems are unerringly discovered. One feels indeed, that certain of these poems are examined with too great minuteness. If a poem is admittedly worthless, - or, like the curate's egg, - "good in spots," - why impede the work and weary the reader by a detailed analysis? Of Keats' maturer work, however, the criticism is accurate and concise. An excellent example is her study of the "Sonnet On The Grasshopper And The Cricket".

"What Hunt does not seem to have noticed is the excellent pattern-weaving of the poem: the sestet beginning with a variant replica of the first line of the octave; the careful keeping of the grasshopper in the octave; the condensed and yet ample characterization of the cricket; the return of the

grasshopper in the last line, welding the two sections together and rounding out the conception with a satisfying completeness."

This passage clearly speaks of the discerning study of a fellow craftsman.

I have indicated some of the outstanding merits of Miss Lowell's work. But has it any faults? It must be admitted that her work, as a whole, is not well-constructed. Much of the material appears ill-digested and unco-ordinated, "raw material," rather than finished literature. There is, one feels, an impeding surfeit of unimportant detail. The unessential is not properly subordinated, and hence the reader's interest often lags, as the movement of the book becomes slow. There are also minor defects in style. Many sentences show a carelessness in structure, as for example, this one:

"Everyone had liked him at school, he was a delightful companion and sensitive to the rights of others."

Such a sentence clearly demands a semi-colon.

On the whole, we may say with truth, that the book shows defects in structure, and the style lacks finish and distinction. The book would surely gain in force and in interest if it were shortened by the exclusion of the unimportant. But, notwithstanding these faults, it is a notable work, a wonderful tribute of a poet to a poetical ideal.

Another aspect of Miss Lowell's work is her achievement as a collector. She had a passion for rare first editions and original manuscripts, especially those of authors that held

particular interest for her; and her wealth made it possible for her to satisfy her desires. Even before she began writing, she was known to dealers in rare books, who respected her highly for her wisdom and discernment in buying.

Clement Shorter considered the library at Sevenels one of the most beautiful private libraries in the world. It is a vast room, panelled in dark Russian oak and walled with bookcases. Books were everywhere, so that, as Miss Lowell said, "they threatened to put her out of house and home." Notwithstanding their great number, the books were never catalogued. She knew them all as friends.

The library includes a wonderful collection of first editions in which Shelley, Thackeray, Dickens, Jane Austen, Fanny Burney, Fielding, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and many others are represented. There is also a complete set of Hardy in first editions, many of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and the first English edition of Don Quixote.

Among the interesting original manuscripts are Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh," Tennyson's "Vivien," and Browning's "Love Among the Ruins." The manuscript notebook used by George Eliot when writing "Middlemarch" is another of the library's treasures.

There are letters of Shelley, Jane Austen, and Napoleon; one from Charles Dickens to his dear Dora, and one from John Evelyn to Samuel Pepys.

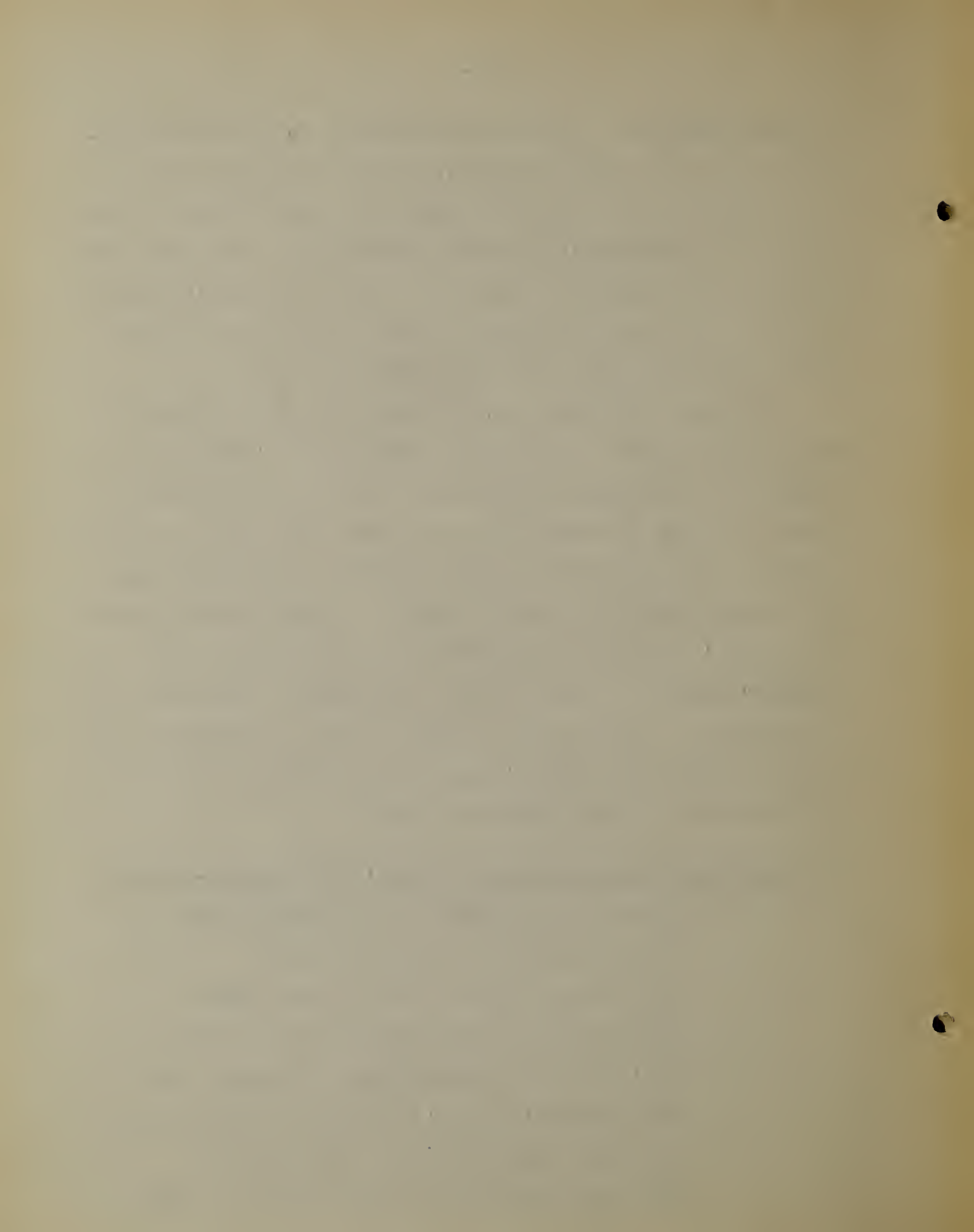
When she was writing "Sea Blue and Blood Red," Miss Lowell collected a wealth of material in connection with Lord Nelson

and Lady Hamilton. This includes some of their love letters, and a set of "The Arabian Nights," which belonged to Horatia. On the flyleaf of the second volume is an unpunctuated inscription in Emma Hamilton's sprawling handwriting. It reads: "May God bless and protect and bless the ever dear Nelson's Horatia may she be all that was great and virtuous like her glorious father amen amen amen prays most fervently E.H."

The Keats collection is, of course, the most complete of any in the library. It includes many of Keats' own books, a number with autograph inscriptions. The most interesting of these is a copy of "Lamia" with the words "John Keats to Fanny Brawn." The collection of Keats manuscripts is larger than any except that in the British Museum. Among them is that of "St. Agnes' Eve," and the sonnet, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." There are also photographs, mementoes, and many letters. When I read of these letters, I thought of the lines in which Oscar Wilde expressed his opinion of those who trafficked in the love letters of Keats.

ON THE RECENT SALE BY AUCTION OF KEATS' LOVE LETTERS---WILDE.

These are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret and apart,
And now the brawlers of the auction-mart
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,
Aye! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price! I think they love not art
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart,
That small and sickly eyes may glare or gloat.



Is it not said, that many years ago,
In a far Eastern town some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
Dice for the garments of a wretched man,
Not knowing the God's wonder, or his woe?"

After reading Miss Lowell's biography of Keats, however, one cannot entertain this feeling about her possession of even his love letters. They seem to belong to her, not so much by right of purchase, as by right of the love, sympathy, and understanding which she had for him and his work.

The resources of the Sevenels library in the field of poetry are remarkable. It is practically a complete collection of poetry from Chaucer to the present time. Every volume of recent contemporary poetry is included, as well as all Miss Lowell's correspondence in connection with the modern poetry movement.

The great library was bequeathed to Harvard. As a part of the college equipment, it will keep her influence alive, and continue the advance of the poetic art to which she dedicated her life. It will serve American students of poetry, just as in life she was ever ready with a helping hand to all young aspirants in this field. Many books of contemporary poetry in the Sevenels library are inscribed by their authors to Miss Lowell in grateful appreciation of her generous aid and encouragement. The following tributes are typical:

"This book is really yours, for without the spur of your suggestion it would never have been written. And so it comes to you with warm regards and a happy sense of indebtedness."

"To Amy Lowell, with love and appreciation of her
steadfast encouragement."

"I feel that this is not altogether my own book--
that the friend who lent her hand toward its print-
ing has some good share in it."

Another evidence of the loving esteem in which she was held by other poets is the constant stream of poems, all acknowledging some poetic or intellectual contact, which have been appearing in the magazines ever since her death. The spirit of these is shown in the wistful beauty of a poem by Alexander MacLeish, in the January Atlantic Monthly.

FOR AMY LOWELL

"And I had put that evening by
To think of on the day she'd die:

How thus she went, and this she said—
To think of that when she was dead:

To hear her words that day again,
Electric words like August when
The wind shifts.

pelting words like rain

That quickens on the windowpane

And makes the wet world seem to spill
In tilting ruin down the sill,

Words that careened across the sky
The way the seaward winds go by
Towering their canvas in the sun,

Words thick as leaves, words one by one
And perfect as the single moon;

And now-so short a time-so soon-

And I remember the clear
Speech-her speaking-

now I hear

Beneath the dead leaves on this distant hill
Only how very still it is--how still."

We are still too near Miss Lowell's time to make any final estimate of her work. As I have said, there is great difference of opinion among critics as to its essential value. Clement Wood, in his recent critical volume, says: "Upon the technical side, Miss Lowell is a glittering craftsman, lacking the genius of those who unerringly choose the patterns and tunes suitable to their words. She is the most brilliant failure in modern poetry; a polyphonic Joshua leading a crew with a strong Bedlam contingent seven times round and round about the walls of the poetic Jericho which disobligingly fail to fall at her trumpet blast."

In this criticism there is a grain (perhaps several grains)

of truth, but I found that my respect for her work increased upon closer acquaintance. I think that she was right in her estimate of her own work in "A Critical Fable;" there is much that is good in it, and with the lapse of time her fame is likely to become "more rather than less." Certainly she has added to the literary wealth of the world by painting unforgettable pictures of opulent beauty in many forms, by revealing the magic of words under the hand of one who, as she says, could "make them obedient," and by creating a glowing pageant of other times and other lands.

We must admire her, too, as a robust and vivid personality, who savored life with gusto and shared its sensations and enthusiasms. Indeed so vital was she that it is hard to think of her as dead. A poem by Amy Lowell on Alice Meynell has just appeared in the Atlantic Monthly (March, 1926). It was evidently written at a time when Miss Lowell was full of ambitions and plans for the future. In the last stanza she compares her busy life with the rest and quiet which had enfolded her sister poet, and ends with the lines,

"But I shall recollect no more.

Between us I must shut the door,

The living have so much to do."

It comes on the reader with a sense of shock that now the same stillness enfolds them both.

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